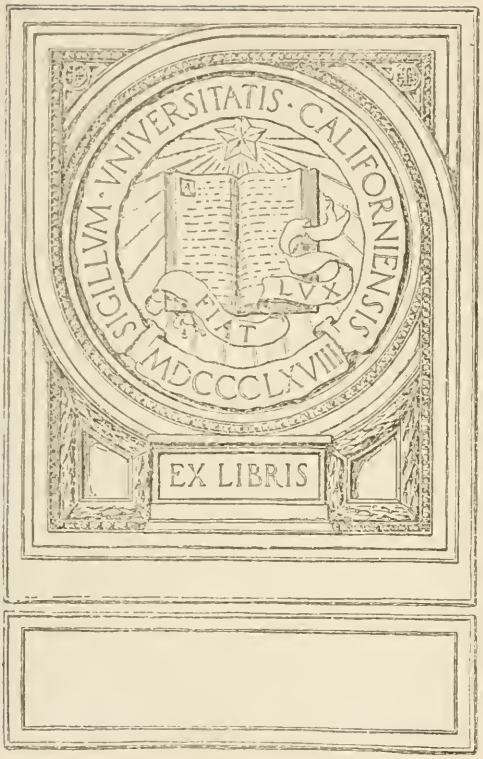

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THE HILL OF GOOD-BYE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

With Pole and Paddle down the Shire and Zambesi.

THE HILL OF GOOD-BYE

THE STORY OF A SOLITARY WHITE WOMAN'S LIFE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

BY

JESSIE MONTEATH CURRIE

Author of *"With Pole and Paddle down the Shire and Zambesi."*

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

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With Loving Pride
I dedicate this book
To the Memory of my only Son
ADAM CURRIE,
1*st Scots Guards,*
Who fought for Freedom till he fell in
Action in his fourth year at the Front.

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THE HILL OF GOOD-BYE

CHAPTER I

UP THE ZAMBESI RIVER

WHEN I sit alone, lost to things external, I see sights that few can. Marvellous rocky peaks, mysterious depths, and familiar dark figures, whose eyes flash with passion or mirth, pass before me. I hear sounds—soft childish voices, weird beating of drums and woeful yells, and the clear call of a bugle. It is the "lipenga." The flag is lowered. The dark figures cease their work. The sun slips behind the long line of purple hills. The small creatures awake in the grass—click, click, all night. It is quite dark. Can I make it light to you? Can I make you see the sights that haunt me, and hear the sounds that thrill me even now? I would that I could.

To begin with, there was the long, long journey which must be rapidly gone over, dwelling only

on those parts that help the picture or story, to give an idea of the great distance between Britain and Mount Mlanje. "Mlanje" means the "Hill of Good-bye." How little I thought of its meaning then. Later I had cause to do so.

After a three weeks' voyage to Cape Town and a fortnight's sailing up the East Coast of Africa we reached Quilimane. From there we travelled in a small steamer to Chinde, the mouth of the Zambesi, where we lay at anchor all night as it was too late to cross the bar. Next morning on the 5th September, 1892, we landed.

Chinde is a sandy plain. Sand is in the breeze, in the water, and in the food, in fact everywhere. The dwarf palms alone seem to thrive near the shore. As we had to wait for the river steamer we stayed in Peluchi's hotel, a bamboo and mud house with a thatched roof, consisting of an eating-room with two bedrooms on one side, like horse stalls, divided by a wooden partition only half-way up to the roof.

There was a small party of us—Mr. H——, a teacher, who will appear later in this story, a young lady who expected to meet her intended on the river, and myself. I also hoped that my husband, whom I had not seen for over a year, would get down part of the way. We had been married only a fortnight when he left.

There was a great scarcity of water in this place. We ladies had to content ourselves with a little in a basin which we used alternately. It was muddy, being gathered from a hole dug in the sand.

How hot it was! But for the air from the sea we could hardly have existed. Yet we were told that up the river it was much hotter, the temperature being 120° in the shade. By day we waded through the sand, sinking up to the ankle at every step. At night we sat in the eating room. The door stood wide open. Bats flew above us under the raftered roof while we wrote letters and listened to the lap, lap of waves from the shore.

A week after our arrival word came that the steamer the *James Stevenson* was stuck on a sandbank a short distance up the river. A number of men started in a boat to help to push her off. Everybody treated it as a good joke. We ladies were much excited thinking that our escorts might be aboard. But it was not till next day that she arrived, when we learned that no one had come to meet us as yet.

Three days after we rose at four in the morning to start on our river journey. It was quite dark but the air was dry for a wonder, as often a heavy dew falls through the night. The dawn came as soon as we had crossed the gangway.

Now we were fairly into the Zambesi. The river narrows and broadens by turns. We float past rich fertile banks and wooded shores. Long creepers, twining round the dense foliage, dangle pear-shaped gourds at the edge of the water. Many coloured butterflies flutter over the long reeds that wave their yellow bushy heads when a bird flies from them. Behind, great ant hills rise like pyramids, peaked and brown. Banana bushes appear and we can see tall dark figures watching us curiously from the top of a steep bank. Some clap their hands in salutation. Here now are small groups of native huts, little homesteads where many a story has lived and tragedy happened.

Woods again with foliage of every colour glide past us. Sandbanks stretch out in the water on which stand many long-legged white birds with blackish heads. A shot is heard. The startled birds open their wings and fly over the landscape. A crocodile, which has been basking in the sunshine, like a wet brown stone, turns over and drops with a splash in the water, showing its white belly uppermost.

Shot after shot ! A German, one of our fellow travellers, is having some sport. Many crocodiles meet with a similar fate.

Now we pass a native canoe, made from the

hollowed trunk of a tree, paddled by nude natives who look interestedly up at us. How strange I feel sitting here on deck, everything around me quivering with heat. I am glad of my Terai hat and white umbrella, though a wet towel would be more grateful.

Suddenly our progress is checked. We have stuck on a sandbank. Twenty black boys wade to the shore with a rope and try in vain to move the ship. Then they carry the anchor a good distance up the bank where they cast it into the river. Then the twenty boys, all waving their hands in the air, dance through the water again, and try to pull the steamer towards the anchor. Ultimately all the cargo is put into a barge; but the sun sinks and we have to content ourselves here for the night, as we only travel by daylight.

At first these stoppages are a little alarming, but they happen so often that we laugh at them, though we regret the loss of time. Every day brings a new interest. We pass the baobab tree under which the wife of Dr. Livingston lies. I take out my water-colours and make a rapid sketch. The red roofs of Shupanga, surrounded by many trees, make a bright bit of colour.

One afternoon we sight a canoe in which is a white man. It proves to be the Doctor, the young lady's intended. He gives me a letter from my

husband, who writes he will meet me at Katunga's village, a good distance up the river. Henceforth I am all impatience to reach that place.

At Mpinde, a trading station, we change our steamer for a smaller one—the *Lady Nyassa*. In it we are much crowded. There is only one cabin, which we ladies occupy. The men sleep where they can. We have our meals on one small deck which has no railing. At night the flies are terrible. Thousands of white-winged insects cloud the lamp at dinner, fall into our food, and on the table. At last the light is put out and we have more comfort.

Soon we enter the Morambala Marsh, a dangerous place for fever, but each night I have taken a few grains of quinine so have no fear, besides it is the dry season and more healthy. High undulating hills rise on our right. Here the sportsman has fever. I am sure his dreams will be full of crocodiles. I give him my mattress though to-night I must lie on the bare boards.

Next day we arrive at Port Herald. From here we will travel in small boats. There seems nothing to hinder us from proceeding on our journey. But alas! an important box, belonging to the young lady, is discovered to have been left behind. She insists on waiting for it. Her intended cannot refuse her.

My heart sinks as daily I am feeling weaker from the extreme heat, and I fear my husband will be anxiously waiting for me at Katunga's village, a not too healthy place. The few white men, stationed here, urge us to go on, expatiating on the dangers of the climate. They speak in vain, not knowing that the box contains the wedding finery.

We watch the rest of the passengers sail off in their boats. For three days we stay here. It is a wild place. A short time ago a lion killed eight or nine of the native villagers. We are afraid to venture far, but the men go hunting for marabou. We keep near our boat where we sleep at nights in a little hut at the stern.

On the fourth day, as no box is forthcoming, we proceed on our journey. Ten nude natives paddle each boat, or, when the water is shallow, stand working their long poles. They sing a weird, haunting song which seems to fit in with the atmosphere, the strange sights, and the loneliness of the situation. Now it is a chant supposed to have been taught by the Jesuit missionaries. How plaintively they repeat the line—

"Sine mama, sine baba"
(*Without mother, without father*).

Sometimes the boat is stopped for the men to wade ashore to search for food. We wonder often if

they have left us for good, but no, they come laden with sweet potatoes and rice.

By day we sit on our mattresses which are spread out in the hut at the end of the boat ; the broad door is open so we can watch the natives paddle, but there is no coolness in the air. We get very much cramped, and try to walk when we get to the shore at night, but it is impossible to go far, for long charred reeds cover the ground.

After seventeen days on the river we reach Cheromo, where an agent of the African Lakes Company examines our luggage. The Doctor seems inclined to wait again for the young lady's box, but the teacher kindly offers to remain till it comes, so we get off next morning.

This part of the river is very beautiful. Behind the long reeds graceful bamboos and tall palm trees adorn the banks. Red and green birds flit in and out their sand-holes. Other birds sing in the thicket. Butterflies sport over the water which is as smooth as glass. We are in the river Shire now. Often our boat gets so near the bank that reeds and bushes brush harshly against its side and forwardly push their branches in at our little window.

At every meal we picnic on shore. Then I make an extra pot of tea, and take it into the boat, our thirst is so terrible, and it is not safe to drink

unboiled water. In the afternoons now I sit alone in my floating hut, for the young lady keeps the Doctor company. I am lying on my mattress with arms stretched out to dry. Perspiration streams down my face. Impatiently I push my head through the little window in the hope that a faint breeze may cool me. There is a splash. I stretch my neck—another splash—and I see white spray tossed in the air. Then two great heads of hippopotami stare at me from the water.

But thank God, we are past them. I lie back on my pillow and daub my face with my handkerchief. When we go ashore that night I feel so exhausted I can hardly crawl from the boat. Our boatmen throw themselves on the ground in all manner of positions, while one or two go in search for food. It is now quite dark save for the fire on which our meal is cooking. Frogs croak incessantly in the marshes. Many fireflies flit like stars through the air. One is caught and is seen to have a small body with long brownish wings. Underneath a mysterious blue light flutters and glows brightly.

Soon we are in bed, the mosquito curtain secure around us. We hear the boys chattering outside. Sometimes there is a splash from a crocodile near our boat, but we fall asleep with the croak, croak from the frogs in our ears.

As we go further up the river more and more sandbanks cause us delay. I have a foolish feeling that this journey will never end. The boat twines round and round a serpentine route, which is narrow and bordered by dense foliage at each side. But there is no shade. The sun, like a persistent hawk, hovers above us, never for one moment removing its eye.

On the bushes, cast snake skins, dry and whitish, hang by the score. It seems an enchanted river. For hours we sail without one break in the dark green thickets that wall our course.

At last an opening, and hope once more! Papia, the only boatman who wears a hat, throws back his head and sings. He is such a curious spectacle, with that old bashed straw hat, that I covertly sketch him.

We are into a small bay. Dark hued women, each with a baby tied on her back, are bathing in the water. They dive, babies and all, and emerge laughing merrily. How cool they look. I would fain watch them a little longer, but our boat sails past them.

Now I see, beyond a bank, a queer little grass roofed hut erected on very high poles where a native stays to watch his crops of Indian corn. Here we land for lunch, and to stretch our limbs. That over, we all get into one boat, for we will

shortly pass through Hippopotamus Bay. We keep watch expectantly. At last fifteen or sixteen huge heads appear above the water, tossing spray, and of course our boat chooses to stick on a sandbank.

The natives get out and try to dig a course with their hands. After much effort we float again. We pass the hippos sporting in their bay, their great, bare, pink heads looking hideous and shining with the water. They shake their ears with extreme enjoyment. One yawns ; there is a sound like thunder, and inside its mouth is a red cavern.

We are relieved to be past them for our boat shows evidence of previous attacks. More than one patch of zinc has been nailed on its side. Now I hope that we shall soon reach Katunga's village which is our next port. But the natives are lazy. They draw into a bank about four o'clock in the afternoon, meaning to rest for the night. After much persuasion and loud language they sulkily resume their duty. We camp at six beneath some tall palm trees. Against one rests a large cup made of a gourd, having a wooden handle over three yards long for reaching down for water. This we use as the bank is very steep.

The sun, as if weary of watching its quarry, sets. Darkness comes suddenly on us, but the

camp fire sets up a cheery glow. The natives crouch round it, watching the pots. There is a grateful odour of tea and sweet potatoes. When the meal is over the crew wrap themselves up in their grass-cloth sacks and go to sleep. But, fascinated by the strange scenes, we sit and watch, listening to the stern croaking of the frogs. High up on the hills bush fires burst out. They run up and down till they meet each other when they seem to change into writhing fiery serpents.

For several more days we sail. I am hardly expecting to reach Katunga's now, or is it that a stolid indifference has come over me? The river has broadened and narrowed. Cultivated country appears. Yet we pass more hippos, crocodiles are an hourly occurrence. We see plots with banana bushes, tomatoes and Indian corn.

After fully three weeks on the river I am told that we will certainly reach Katunga's village before night. Is it possible after so much disappointment and delay that I shall see my husband at last? Fate seems against it.

Our boat stops again, though this time the water is quite deep. A canary, which the young lady has brought all the way from Durban, has escaped from its cage. Her fiancé rushes madly from the boat to search for it. To me it seems

like looking for a needle in a hay-stack. But I have long since resigned myself to fate. What although my husband should have malaria waiting so long for me, or that I die on the river, as so many others have done ?

I throw myself on my mattress and say not a word.

After long waiting in the insufferable heat the Doctor actually appears with the canary. My companions look at me with eyes of reproach as I don't congratulate them. How bitter and horrible I have grown. But that tired feeling has come over me again. Sweet unconsciousness comes in sleep.

I am awakened suddenly. " Mrs. C—— we are at Katunga's. I am sure I see your husband waiting for you on the bank," I hear the young lady saying.

I start up. We are drawing in to a landing stage. The others step out. There are mutual greetings. But I am like a stone. I cannot move.

A man enters my boat. He is white and thin, not like the man who left me on that sad morning. But it is my husband. My heart thaws. I rise to meet him. " You are a brick," he says as he leads me from the boat.

CHAPTER II

ACROSS THE GREAT TUCHILLA PLAIN

ONE of the African Lakes Company, a man with a terribly washed out appearance, led us into a roughly built house where we had a good tea. That over we sat in the verandah and talked as those talk who have been long separated.

Next morning we got up at five. A large number of natives were waiting outside to carry us in our machillas. A machilla is simply a hammock slung from a pole. It is rather queer getting in for the first time. The men stand very still, the pole resting on their shoulders, while one swings oneself into it. I felt very comfortable, with a cushion behind my head, and a pretty awning of cloth above to protect me from the burning sun. In my pocket was a lemon for refreshment by the way. Our carriers were strongly built men with glossy chocolate-coloured skin. That they were happy we could not doubt.

Every little while they would clap their hands, as they trotted up the hill, and sing in chorus their native songs. This one in particular seemed a favourite :—

"Mbungo, mbungo, wajiweni kwa ?"
(*The wind, the wind, where hath it been seen ?*)

They were inclined also to extempore songs. I had a strong suspicion that they were singing about me. I would hear repeatedly the word "Donna," their name for a white woman, and "Mlanje," the mountain to which we were travelling. I could not help wondering if the song were flattering, or the reverse. More probably it was the latter for the native is very quick to grasp anything that may seem to him a peculiarity. Later I discovered that they thought my waist a deformity, and that I wore too much cloth.

The air ceases to be stifling as one ascends the hill, but we did not appreciate the difference, having left in the cool of the morning, and with the sun growing hotter as the day advanced. The road was very steep, often my feet were higher than my head. Where there were precipices the men would walk at the very edge, making me sick to look down.

At the first stream we were to have lunch. How I longed for it. Although I had already eaten

the whole lemon my thirst seemed unquenchable. Shortly before mid-day the welcome sound of running water was heard, and we soon alighted from our machillas.

A picnic in the jungle! What could be more exquisite? To fill our kettle from a brook wandering down mysterious valleys; to sit under some ancient tree, perhaps a remnant of the virgin forest, should be a perfect delight. But a green serpent is bathing in the water. Thousands of black beetles, like a garment of jet, cover that boulder which we thought such an inviting seat. Over there, right to the top of that dying tree the white ants have made their wondrous tunnels, the bark being almost entirely hidden by the red earth which they have dragged up.

However, the fire is lit, and the blue smoke curls up. The tea is boiled in the kettle. The African Lakes Agent has provided well for us. There are two roasted fowls, scones and jam. Everything is eaten; the tea is drunk and my thirst seems as bad as ever. It is best not to linger too long here, lest a lion or some other wild animal may be coming for a more substantial meal.

After a sufficient rest we started on our way again. Here and there the charred trunk of a tree, a victim of the last bush fire, stretched out

its naked branches. Not a sound was heard save the patter of the men's feet and their pleasant snatches of song. Not a creature crossed our path, only the sun watched our going with unflinching eye, and beat on us unmercifully.

Late in the afternoon, when I had nearly fallen asleep, I heard, to my astonishment, the sound of wheels, a sound which I did not expect to hear in that part of the country. Looking forward I saw approaching a dogcart with two white men. One alighted and introduced himself as Mr. F—— from Mandala, the principal trading post of the African Lakes Company. Having heard of our coming they had very considerately determined to convey us the length of Blantyre Mission, where we would stay the night.

We too ladies got into the dogcart, and after driving a long way, were met by the school children and married girls. All came running and clapping their hands. Soon we saw in the distance the beautiful church, a dark red building with a white dome. At Mandala we had tea and in the evening drove to Blantyre, where we had a hearty welcome. The manse seemed luxurious to me, who had not been in a proper house since leaving Quilimane. The verandah was the finest I ever saw. It was broad and beautifully smooth, with linoleum along the centre. Its latticed

fence was hidden with a hedge of jessamine and creeping plants.

"How hot it is," everybody was saying; but I felt it comparatively cool after the fearful heat on the river. After our experiences on the journey it seemed as if a wand had been raised and had transformed the jungle into a mansion and pleasure garden.

Yet not more than a stone's throw from here I saw a native village with its people looking as degraded as those on the *Zambesi*.

At Blantyre we parted from our two travelling companions, who were going in another direction, and proceeded on our journey. About four miles from the Mission we came in sight of the Limbe, a coffee planter's house, a long one-storied building of wattle and daub with verandah, and a semi-circle of well-kept ground in front with a bower of bananas in the middle. Of course our carriers had to clap their hands as we approached it. Their way was to give little claps at intervals in a song. Now they roared their lustiest :—

"Chilambo cha mkolo
Changali walume,
Walume uwe."
(*O country of women without any men,*
We are the men, we are the men).

Hearing the noise, a number of native servants ran out to meet us, followed by the kindly hostess and her sister, Miss W——. White folk are always welcomed here if they are respectable at all; but we received more than ordinary hospitality. Both ladies urged us to stay a few days, but after tea, and an hour's rest, we bade them good-bye. We were anxious to get home. The jungle lay before us, covering a plain, nearly fifty miles in extent, the haunt of the lion, zebra, koodoo and elephant. At that time there was no proper road, only a path, the breadth of a man, lay between the high grass and scrub. Here and there, some trees, impeding the way, had been cut down, leaving awkward sharp stumps in the middle of the track. I could have cried out with pain when I was bumped against them. Then the men would look behind with pretended sympathy, and walk slowly round the next stump, the natives in front looking back for my approval. But soon they would forget, and I was in constant dread of another knock.

When we had gone a considerable distance we met two natives running wildly. The machillas were stopped and the strangers told in one breath what had frightened them. I did not understand, but I had no time to question. Our men started at a gallop. Such a noise they made, enough to frighten all the beasts in the jungle.

At last they slackened their speed. The sweat was streaming from their brows, causing a strange odour. Then I heard the one word —" Lisimba."

" What is ' lisimba ' ?" I asked my husband, who was about a yard behind me.

" A lion," he answered ; then he told me that the scared men had seen a lioness with her cubs by the path, but that now we were past the dangerous spot.

It was well I had not known, but so many new objects took up my attention I gave it no more thought. Turning a corner of the path I saw the most lovely creeper clinging to a bush. It was covered with golden velvety pods, hanging in graceful confusion. I called to the Msungu (*master or white man*) : " O, stop a minute till I gather some of that lovely plant."

My husband laughed. " No," he said mysteriously, " it is the likwanya. If you touch it once, you'll never do so again."

Then the natives, doubtless guessing our conversation, began to sing :—

" Likwanya likunyanya pa chiko,
Anyalale."
(*The likwanya stings at the ford,*
O be silent).

The velvety pile of the likwanya pods is composed

of the tinest poisonous thorns which, on touching, cause severe pain and irritation. So we wisely left it behind us.

That night we decided to camp at Midima, a native village on a small hill in the centre of the Great Tuchilla Plain. As we began the ascent what a rugged little path it was. Great jagged rocks shot up at each side. The bushes slapped our faces. The stumps of trees bumped us unmercifully. But the men had started their song again :—

"*O country of women without any men,*
We are the men, we are the men."

We were coming near the village at last. There was a fierce barking of dogs, and a number of wolfish-looking creatures stretched their necks over a rock, as if they were guarding some fortress ; but on our nearer approach they slunk away.

The village lies in a saucer-like hollow. Here all its people are gathered to greet us. A child in arms screams at our white faces, some run away, but peer curiously round the corner of a hut. The headman, thin and lanky, with breast tattoed, wearing a scanty piece of cloth and a cock's feather stuck erect in his matted hair, comes forward to greet us.

" Moni, atate " (*morning, father*) he says politely, and the women crowding behind him to get their

first glimpse of a white woman, wish me "Moni, amao."

What a wild place it is. Great boulders are scattered here and there. It is a scene for witches and uncanny spirits. No wonder the people are superstitious. On the trees and bushes hang horns and queer objects, charms to frighten away the evil spirits and thieves from their little plots of pumpkins and sweet potatoes.

But now, two skinny old women have come over to us with presents of eggs and a diminutive fowl, which cackles shrilly. I can almost believe that they are veritable witches. Their meagre cloth, brown with the soil, hangs ragged round their naked limbs. Inserted in their upper lips are large bone rings which cause them to protrude hideously. Their shrivelled breasts hang down beyond the waist like empty leather bags.

But see, how they smile. How soft and child-like are their voices as they present their gifts. We accept them gratefully and give them some beads and cloth in return.

My husband started at once to fix our tent. A fire was lit. Our black boy prepared our supper. The sun sank rapidly—

"Like a magician extended his golden wand o'er the landscape,
Twinkling vapours arose, and sky, and water and forest
Seemed all on fire at the touch and melted and
mingled together."

Then darkness fell, and in a moment the great silence of Nature was broken by thousands of little voices—click, click, incessantly from every side. The tiny creatures in the grass were having their concert, each of them trying to sing its loudest.

We sit in the red glow of the fire. Dark figures are grouped around us. There are flashings of eyes and glints of white teeth. That queer odour, peculiar to the native, from warm naked bodies, is strong. We nevertheless enjoy our supper. Tea tastes so good in the wilderness. We soon withdraw into our tent, where our travelling mattresses are spread out. The Msungu places his loaded revolver near his hand, and I try to sleep. But no. There is something weird about this place. The last flickering lights from the fire, which have consolingly played through the slits of the canvas, have gone. The vexed howling of an hyena rings through the night.

I must have fallen asleep, for I awake. A dim bluish light fills the tent. I hear a cock crow. Am I at home? Alas, no! I see the grey folds of the tent and hear an unknown tongue outside. We rise and go out into the chill air, but I return for a blanket to wrap round me, while I gratefully drink hot cocoa and eat a cabin biscuit.

A little girl, almost naked, came over to us and

stared wonderingly. My husband gave her a bright piece of cloth. Then a tall man appeared, evidently her father. "We will keep her carefully for you, Msungu," he said in his own language.

We thought little of the incident; but my husband discovered afterwards that the giving of a piece of cloth to a girl signifies a betrothal.

We started early that morning. About noon the men in front, carrying the loads, suddenly stopped, and earnestly examined something on the ground. We alighted and saw the footmarks of some large animal. "Lisimba!" the men cried excitedly.

It gave one a queer feeling to think that a lion might be, at that very moment, watching us from the thicket. Then a native exclaimed:—

"Alole, Msungu, nyumba ako." (*Look, Msungu there is a house.*)

We looked, but could see nothing save bush over bush, and the distant peaks of Mlanje.

"Ako, ako!" (*There, there!*) The word "ako" was prolonged and increased in sound, as if it would carry us to the exact part. I observed later that the African has a language in tone as well as in words.

Then, true enough, we saw a little blue smoke

rising against a clump of trees. We hastily got into our machillas and in a few minutes had reached a white man's tent.

Have you any idea of tent life in the wilderness ? You get up at sunrise when your boy has lit a fire. Perhaps you are shivering with cold, being full of malaria, so you exert yourself to prepare breakfast. You look over your box of provisions, all the way from London, and probably you fix upon a tin of sausages which you open after searching everywhere for the tin-opener. Then you wait impatiently till some sweet potatoes are roasted, all the time guarding jealously with the tail of your eye the tin of meat. If you should suddenly be called away to some other duty, you carry your tin with you, otherwise you might not find it on your return. Your boys could easily explain everything. The likoswe (*rat*) ate it, or a monkey sprang from a tree and carried it away. All the same the natives lick their lips when your back is turned.

At evening you will retire to your tent where your mattress, if you have one, lies on the ground. Your cupboard, in the shape of a box or two, stands near your bed. Every day is practically the same, the same pleasures, the same worries, the same loneliness all around you. When the time comes for your departure, if you are still

alive, you can " fold your tent like the Arab, and as silently steal away."

As we approached the tent, a white man, minus a coat and badly wanting a shave, came out to meet us. He invited us in and made us sit down on his best cabin box. He shouted a mixture of Yao and English to his black servants and started to set some enamelled cups and saucers on another box. Then he produced some grey substance which he called bread, and a tin of butter which had turned to oil. Fortunately we had our own hamper so we produced our good things and he did enjoy them.

Then he told us how a lion had come to his tent through the night and stolen a piece of goat's flesh.

We left him. Early in the afternoon we reached the Tuchilla river. The natives waded across with the loads. The water laved their limbs above their knees. I was sure if I consented to be carried that the man would drop me, and the machilla was out of the question as it would drag in the water.

A tree has fallen half-way over the river, a boulder lies a short distance from it, then another short breadth of water before the bank. We decide on this way. One of the men will walk by my side while I cross on the tree's trunk.

"So steady, Kumbokola." I rest my hand on his shoulder, and proceed very timidly. I feel badly balanced. I fain would clutch him round the neck; but the Msungu is coming fast behind me. I go forward desperately, and at last reach the end of the log. Then, with a helping hand from the other side, I leap, and reach the boulder in safety. Such a fine solid stone it is, overgrown with home-like grey lichen. My legs are firm again, not the wobbly things they were a minute ago. "Hurry up!" the Msungu is crying. I must make room for him. A huge baobab tree, hanging its many ropes considerately over the water, grows on the opposite bank. I seize hold of one of the ropes, leap, and alight safe on the other side.

We pulled ourselves up the steep bank with the help of the baobab tree. Now our carriers required a rest more frequently and the reserve men took their turn. At last we reached the Lekabula river that flows at the foot of Mount Mlanje. We crossed easily at the ford and ascending the bank went through an archway of Iwalli palms, framing the most curious sight I ever saw.

"It is Namonde, the chief," whispered the Msungu, and I looked with interest as I had heard that he was a wizard.

There he sat, awaiting our coming, on a

knoll by the side of the path—a little old man with a short black beard, holding above his bare head an old brown silk parasol. He wore some dark blue muslin thrown over one shoulder, and a strip of dirty calico twisted round his limbs. Behind him sat his wives, some six or eight of them, from mere girls to oldish women. The chief wife, a woman up in years, sat near him, smoking a twist of tobacco.

At our approach Namonde rose, and with a look of great importance, waddled forward. He shook hands with us, while all his wives trooped down to a clearing in the centre of the path, and, forming themselves into a circle, performed a strange wild dance with much singing and hand-clapping.

Thus was I welcomed on coming to Mount Mlanje. There the great mountain stood gloomy in front of us, an immense barracade across the plain. On our left rose an enormous peak of solid rock with mysterious hollows. White cascades gushed from steep slopes into deep ravines. Cliff towered above cliff. Terrific grey boulders, thrown up by some tremendous upheaval, were scattered everywhere.

And there lay the home of the wizard.

I hardly noticed the strange dance. I gave poor attention to the weird music. I did not

perceive the wizard chief watching me curiously with evil cunning eyes. That grand mountain absorbed me, held me, and drew me to it. And, as I wondered in which of those lonely hollows lay my future home, a feeling of great awe fell upon me.

CHAPTER III

MY MOUNTAIN HOME

AFTER leaving Namonde, the chief, we resumed our journey and were soon struggling up the foot of Mount Mlanje. Rugged as the road had been up to Midima it was nothing to this. Mlanje does everything on a grand scale. Its height is nearly 10,000 feet. The narrow path, like a great red scar between giant grasses, rose almost perpendicular, save where the immense rocks made it twist and bend. We had to walk part of the way to prevent us falling out of the machillas, and to spare the men.

As we neared our destination the mission boys, one after another, barefooted and dressed in long white shirts, their Sunday garb, ran down to meet us, all anxious to shake hands with the Donna. I was surprised at their look of intelligence, knowing that a few months before they had been almost savages.

At last we reached the plateau on which our house stood. As my machilla turned I had a view of the scene beneath. If the sight of the mountain had inspired me with awe, the picture from here made me tremble. How can I describe it? Across the vast plain, that melted into a hazy blue, was a wall of purple-peaked hills, jutting into a golden background, where could be seen more distant peaks flooded in sunshine. In the middle distance, the centre of the plain, rose a rugged hillock, like the point of a rusty spear. Over all was an intangible something that made me feel in the presence of God.

Like one in a dream, I turned from it, and saw, a few yards off, my future home, a small thatched bungalow. The Doctor, the only other member of our staff, had erected a white flag, in honour of the first white woman on Mount Mlanje, by sticking its pole between two boulders of rock. He came out to meet us, and we alighted from our machillas. How pale he looked. Probably I was beginning to feel what struck me more later on, when the natives looked no longer black, but we, ourselves seemed ghastly white.

The Msungu, always fond of a joke, had led me to believe that there were no tables or chairs in my African home, but that large empty boxes served the purpose quite as well. I was therefore

surprised to find in the centre room several chairs and a long deal table with actually a tablecloth which a native had made by sewing together long strips of unbleached cotton. It was the first tablecloth on Mount Mlanje.

I daresay my hair was somewhat untidy from lying so long in the machilla, but I did not expect any one to remark it, far less one who had not seen a white woman for many months. But I was mistaken.

"You can go into my bedroom and tidy your hair with my comb and brush," said the Doctor kindly. "Although we are in Central Africa, you know, it does not do to be careless with one's appearance. I find that. We have enough to do to keep ourselves up."

A very good advice which I followed to the letter; but why I could not as readily go into my husband's room, which also opened off the dining room, was a puzzle. Later I discovered that the climate accounted for most mysteries.

Our house which was composed of wattle and daub consisted of three rooms—a dining room with a bedroom on each side. The walls were very artistic. The Msungu, in view of my coming, had with great pains nailed on a lining of split branches of Iwalli palm, the rounded side outwards. Before, they had been so rough that

sometimes a rat would be seen in a cranny, munching a stolen piece of sugar.

The floors were made of badly fired brick. The rooms had no ceilings, only the rafters and thatch ; and no fireplaces. But the disadvantages of these arrangements were to be discovered later. Meanwhile our trouble was to keep cool.

A verandah with a pretty latticed railing surrounded the house. Across the road in front was the garden, long-shaped, with two great boulders at one end. There was little in it save tomato plants, capsicums, a few flowers and a bunch of thyme. Pineapples and Cape gooseberries had been planted, but as yet did not promise success.

A few mud huts, comprising a kitchen, a store and the boys' dormitory, framed a courtyard at the back of the house. Behind these, separated only a short distance by scrubby bush and primeval forest, rose a high precipitous cliff of bare solid rock over which a waterfall dropped 3,000 feet. This formed the Linje stream where we got nearly all our water.

Several paths for convenience had been cut along the mountain, one leading to our little church, a plain mud building, a few yards from our garden, and to Namonde's village. The Mission was barely two years old. Its staff, as

I hinted before, consisted of an ordained and a medical missionary. The natives had to be taught, the bush cut down, bricks made and temporary houses built. While these two men were using up all their strength with manual labour, undoing and re-doing work unfamiliar to them, there were people at home wondering why they did not hear of more conversions, schools and churches.

For the first few days I was overwhelmed with visitors, dark-skinned women in scanty garments with bare breasts and lips disfigured with bone rings, all anxious to get their first sight of a white woman. The Msungu would call me out repeatedly to show myself. "Moni, Donna," they said as we shook hands.

Each brought me a present of eggs, some in chiselas (*flat baskets*) others in pumpkin-like gourds. In return I gave them red beads used for commercial purposes. Soon I had more eggs than I could conveniently use.

Among my visitors was Namonde, the chief, with all his wives. He had the air of a king in spite of his battered felt hat, old white jacket, bare legs and tattooed breast. True, a little blue muslin attempted to hide his limbs, and of course he carried his tattered brown parasol.

A special chair was brought out for him. His chief wife sat on a bench against the wall, while her companions, slaves included, squatted on the ground.

I could not offer them afternoon tea. They might have thought it medicine. Instead I gave the chief wife a peppermint sweet. Peppermints were very precioŭs in those days, as goods from home took an age in coming.

A-Kusieto (*chief wife*) at once put the sweet in her mouth, sucked it complacently, evidently appreciating its flavour, then handed it to her next neighbour who took a suck and passed it on. Thus it went round the whole company excepting the chief.

But the novelty of my presence soon wore away, then it was only when the natives had visitors who must be entertained, that I would be required to make my appearance. Next to myself my travelling rug interested them. They called it "Ngua kulandana chisui" (*cloth like a leopard*).

The first thing I had to learn was the native language—(Yao)—or rather sentences which would enable me to guide my household. Two of these were—"Akawilanje" (*call such and such a person to me*); and "Lina liakwe" (*What do you call this?*) a very necessary sentence by which I could learn any word.

After much trouble I thought I had mastered them. One day, wishing to call the Msungu I said to Kambona, the doctor's little table boy,

"Lina liakwe, Msungu?"

Immediately his hand went to his mouth to conceal a laugh; then he disappeared round the house where he gave vent to a great giggle. A clamour of voices arose, and I knew he was telling the boys what I had said. And what had I said? Simply this: "What name do you give the Msungu?"

Ah yes, that was their secret. They delighted in nicknames, but hardly by stratagem or coaxing could one find out his own. Yet by chance we discovered the Msungu's—"A-Kala-kala" (*the man of many years*) probably because his name was Adam.

On another occasion I had gone to the kitchen, in the back courtyard, to cook the breakfast. I had brought with me a tin of sausages to fry, but I had forgotten the lard.

Here was a dilemma. I was surrounded by black boys, big and little, all anxious to watch the cooking operations. If I went back to my store and left the sausages and other accompaniments, the chances were that I should not find them intact on my return. Should I carry them with me? Even then I feared to hurt the boys'

feelings. But what was I to do? Among all the Yao words I had learned the word *fat* had been omitted.

I gave an enquiring look at the boys, pointed to the frying-pan, then at the house, and made an action as of putting the sausages into the pan. Every lad beamed with intelligence, and all ran to the house with one accord.

I remain, hugging my tin, while I breathe a sigh of relief. Who said that it would be difficult to make the native understand? There, in my very first month, not only one, but all comprehend me.

Yes, there they come. How quick they have been. But, dear me! what are they bringing? One carries a tray, another a brush, another a plate, but not a boy has the fat.

I deplore their ignorance, shaking my head dolefully, then quite regardless of their feelings, I seize my precious tins and sail tragically to my store from whence I return with a tin of lard added to my collection. Holding it out towards the boys I say, after torturing my poor brain—"Lina liakwe?"

"Mauta," they shout together, and I have learned one word more.

Each word added to my vocabulary gave me more confidence, but soon I found that it was

absolutely necessary for my peace of mind to learn, before all culinary knowledge, one word or sentence which would convey to the natives that I did not want their presence.

For my lack of privacy grew intolerable. In my bedroom I was not so bad as they seldom came without my permission. In the centre, or dining room, it was different, for a door stood open at each end for coolness. Somehow these doors seemed to attract the natives, for all the boys and outside workers, both men and women, would gallop madly in at one door and out at the other, disappearing round the house, and appearing next minute with wild yells to run through the room again, repeating the game till I felt like Noah's dove without one restful spot.

I told the Msungu, and he said it was the simplest thing in the world to stop that: when the disturbance came I must say "Chokani," and immediately I would be left severely alone.

Foolishly I did not ask the nature of this magic word. It seemed sufficient that I should acquire the power of dismissing the noisy intruders. I had not to wait long to try its efficacy, the very next day the game began again.

With beating heart I stood nervously hesitating against the wall while the turbulent throng rushed past me. How pale and feeble I must have

appeared to them. But I had the magic word. I drew myself together, and though it was unnatural to me, tried to look commanding.

"Chokani," I said, as firmly as my nerves would permit.

Suddenly the mad procession halts, stares at me in surprise, and bursts into peals of laughter, then takes to its heels and rushes from the house. But it does not come in again. Still, I wonder why the merriment continues in the back courtyard.

Truly it was a magic word. I asked the Msungu, later in the day, what it meant, and why the creatures laughed.

"How did you say it?" asked my instructor.

I repeated the word in an ordinary voice.

The Msungu laughed immoderately. Had I made a mistake, or had he been making fun of me? I demanded to know.

"'Chokani' means '*Get out of this,*'" he said soothingly: "and you know if you say it in a gentle way it sounds funny. You should have said it peremptorily with a sound of thunder in your voice."

"But they obeyed me. That was the important thing," I said smiling, "but I'll remember next time."

But there was no next time. It had been a magic word after all.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTOR'S PROPHECY

ABOUT half a mile from our bungalow lay the village of Namonde, the chief. We walked there shortly after my arrival. In fancy I see the path curving along the mountain, the grey boulders strewn everywhere, one in particular like a primitive castle, its shadows, a transparent Cobalt blue, lying softly upon it; down below, the long, long slope covered with tall rank grass and scrubby bush ending in the vast plain receding and melting into the horizon.

"A leopard crossed my path, just here," said the Msungu. "I had no weapon, but I had to go on. They seldom come out by day though."

I hoped not, but I hid my fears, as my husband had told me when I arrived that I must never speak of being nervous in Africa.

When we reached Namonde's village, which was only a few huts after all, built irregularly at each



NAMONDE'S VILLAGE.

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side of the path, I remember feeling that there were secrets there I dared not penetrate. What meant those mysterious drawings in white chalk on the red wall of a certain hut? They looked like Egyptian hieroglyphics. They reached from the eaves to the ground.

The Msungu said that they were probably symbols of the "Unyago," a ceremony through which all the boys and girls must pass on reaching puberty. In it they are instructed in all the wisdom of the tribe, its knowledge of the universe, its laws and customs, and the essential facts of human life. In fact it is their university course, and though it only lasts about six weeks it is at least comprehensive in its scope.

I don't know how the Doctor or the Msungu felt, but I awoke each morning with a sense of great depression. Of course I was full of malaria. I had a strange desire for something unusual to happen, anything in fact to break the monotony and terrible loneliness.

A few days after my arrival the Doctor had, very considerately, taken a journey up the mountain for a holiday. Poor man, he thought that he was doing us a good turn, but how we wearied for his coming back. Even a honeymoon couple is better of a little society.

When he returned, he would go one way, we the other in our walks; but his dog followed us, understanding us better. But at nights we three would sit together in the verandah after dinner. A yellow glow from the lamp shone through the open door of the dining room. Outside the darkness was dense if the moon had not risen, but the night was alive with mysterious sounds—always the incessant click, click, from the grass and marshes; sometimes the dull thud, thud, of the drums and the mournful wails and shrieks from the dancers at a "maliro" (*a death festival*) in the distance.

Then the Doctor would shake his head and say solemnly: "Everything may look very peaceable just now, but *one day* something will happen."

And inwardly I really hoped something would.

I struggled against my depression in the mornings, and I had much to help me. I could paint many of the scenes around us, the insects and flowers that interested me. Every flower and leaf had to be examined, so new and strange they were. But I saw few flowers, the sun, the wind and bush fires seemed to stunt them around our exposed station. Still a few red gladioli arose to welcome me, and sweet-scented flowers, like large mauve crocuses, appeared under the bushes when the buds were bursting before the rain, nor

must I forget the familiar bracken I found on the hillside.

Talking of spring buds reminds me that we had a remarkable experience with them. One evening the Msungu and I took a walk down the road to the Linje. All was fresh after the rains. Bright emerald leaves, clasped in pairs dotted the bushes. He carelessly plucked a twig, then paused a minute to examine its beauty—when lo, and behold! one of the buds, exactly similar to the others, unfolded wings and flew away.

We saw quite a number of these mimetic insects. The grass-stalk, or walking-stick insect was frequently in our garden, lying on the red soil, like a bit of hard withered jointed grass. It was surprising to see it walking about. On a rock in the bed of the Linje we saw the flat white-grey insect, like birds' dropping, that Henry Drummond discovered. Another day the boys drew our attention to what seemed a withered purple iris stuck on the fence. It remained so still that I sketched it in water-colour; then it took wing I know not where. We think it must have been some large insect just emerged from its chrysalis.

One day the Msungu brought me two native girls. Both were naked save for their loin cloths. Their bodies were splashed with mud which showed light on their dark skin. They had been mudding

houses, a work which is always done there by women and girls.

The eldest girl, Mele, or Mary as we called her, was petite and decidedly a beauty. A rosy hue shone through her dusky cheeks. She had a laughing mouth with lovely curves, though the upper lip tilted slightly upward. Her nose, in which she often wore a "Chipini" (*a nose pin*) was small. Her bare breasts stood out firm and round. She might have been about sixteen.

The younger girl, Ajaula, was rather plain and of a square build. Her eyelashes were very long giving a peculiar look to her narrow eyes. Her neck was entirely hidden by many plies of a thick beaded necklace which gave her a deformed appearance. She might have been about twelve years old.

The name "Mele" means "*on purpose*"; "Ajaula," "*rain is coming.*"

"See what you can make of them," said the Msungu, smiling. "I would suggest that the first thing they should get is a good bath. Give them a bit of soap and let them go to the Linje stream."

And he left me looking at them hopelessly.

But a short time afterwards when they were washed and dressed they looked quite different. The length of unbleached cotton the Msungu

had given each of them, was wound round the body from the top of the breast to a little above the knee, and skilfully tucked in under the arm-pit. We had removed Ajaula's heavy necklace and she looked quite pleasant.

Now my work lay before me. Everything was new to them. "Kusalala" (*pretty*) they would say, dwelling tenderly on the word, when they saw something that they admired. In the fore-noons I taught them housework; in the afternoons reading, writing and sewing. They never had seen before even the letters of the Alphabet; and the sewing was all done by the men in Africa. The thimble amused them very much at first. Mele tried it on, then rolled on her back laughing. They liked their lessons, but they hated housework. On the whole they were lazy and preferred to bask in the sunshine, or play. The very first morning, after their arrival, they came to me to ask if they might go "quenda-jenda" (*a walk*).

I am sorry now that I did not let them. I had an absurd idea that discipline must begin at once. They obeyed because they had to. No girl or boy was allowed into our Mission without first being told that there must be no "Ngingusosa" (*I don't wish*), a favourite expression of the native.

However, every Sunday afternoon they were allowed home, and when they returned they

always brought me tiny nosegays which they had culled by the way, each tied neatly with a piece of dried grass.

One morning I was horrified to see them appear with their heads clean shaven. They looked so funny that I determined to stop them doing it again ; but the Msungu told me that it was a very necessary custom, especially in the dry season when insect life is so prolific. I also noticed that Mele occasionally wore a straw stuck through a tiny hole in her upper lip, evidently preparatory to a lip ring, but as long as she did not disfigure herself I would not interfere.

At first they were very fond of smearing their faces with castor-oil, but as that was disagreeable we stopped it. Apart from that I never saw them doing anything objectionable ; indeed as regards decency they were in some respects superior to many boys and girls of the lower class at home. They came to me outwardly dirty, but once given soap they were always clean and their skin beautifully polished.

CHAPTER V

THE WASHING DAY

OUR day began early. Before six o'clock in the morning a boy brought us tea; that finished we dressed and went out into the cool air. Sometimes the mist lay on the plain like a sea or great lake, causing the nearest conical hills to look like islands. Then I tried to do as much as possible before the heat grew oppressive. Usually I baked a batch of scones on the girdle, the oven being far from satisfactory. It resembled a small tunnel built on the floor. It was filled with brushwood which was allowed to burn away. When one wanted to cook the burning ash was scraped out. Such a heat escaped that one day, before my arrival, the Msungu, engaged in culinary matters, had his eyelashes clean burnt off.

The baking finished it was time to prepare our breakfast. Our meat consisted chiefly of small fowls, but we had a store of tinned foods from London which we used largely. Rice, yams and sweet potatoes were our staple vegetables, although

we grew pumpkin also. A coarse banana called plantain we roasted in hot ashes. On one occasion we had a piece of zebra which I jokingly declared tasted of the stripes ; but though we ate it neither of us liked it. Once the Msungu visited a store some distance off and brought home two round Dutch cheeses coloured a deep red. There was a great dispute among the boys whether they were grown or made.

Breakfast over, two table boys removed the dishes to the end of the verandah where they were washed by two other lads. In this way was the work divided. Such a clattering and scraping of plates ensued while left food was greedily consumed, and I bustled with my girls over household duties. The Doctor had very applicably called our home the "Crow's Nest," it being a little mud affair standing on a height, exposed to every wind that blew ; with little black figures flitting about twittering songs accompanied by expressive glances from bright flashing eyes.

The forenoon past, lunch was taken, consisting of a milk pudding, a tin of fruit and a cup of tea. That over I was thankful to lie down in my shady bedroom with a newspaper over my face to protect me from flies, and the few mosquitoes that had come up with my luggage. But it made me hotter. I would throw it off

my bursting face. Then an ominous sound would come above me—ping, ping, nearer and nearer. I would raise my hands in readiness, and just as the mosquito came in sight, clap them together, and look expecting to see its mangled corpse, when lo ! I would see it free and prepared to attack me with renewed energy.

It was very provoking, especially if it were washing-day, a day I dreaded. So did Mele. On that particular morning we would find her lying on the ground. She was "kulwalla" (*ill*) she said. It was a curious fact that when ever there was any extra work to be done a peculiar sickness came over her. At all other times she was "like a young roe skipping upon the hills."

At first we let her lie, but finding it occur too often the Msungu laughed her out of it by saying the day before the washing, "Ah, poor Mele, she will be ill to-morrow."

What made the work harder was the want of proper utensils. The large box of ironmongery, which I had brought the length of the coast, had been robbed on the plain. The carriers had a glib story. They had been attacked by another tribe and most of the goods stolen. Their very garments had been taken off them. Indeed it appeared so. They presented a curious spectacle

having plastered or woven the broadest leaves they could find round their bodies. "What could they do?" they said. "They were only children."

They cheerfully received their pay, so many yards of cloth, then squatted down in front of the house and began to scrape the sweat from their breasts with their dirk-like knives.

Fortunately a filter and a few odds and ends were left, and the teacher, Mr. H——, kindly sent me a kettle, but the large pot for boiling the clothes was gone. By good luck my dishes came all safe at another time.

To make things worse, I had no wash-house and no water nearer than the Linje, as the little stream which the Msungu had led from it, and which the natives called "England," was dry at this season. And worst of all I had no energy to combat my difficulties.

But a husband is not a bad thing when you are in trouble. He suggested that we should wash in a shed which had been used for drying bricks. He gave me two large empty paraffin tins to boil the clothes. They had no lids certainly, but trifles like these we could do without. He also arranged for three or four native women to assist my girls as it generally takes five or six natives to do the work of one white person.

The day before the washing the women and

girls were sent to fetch water from the stream. They carried it in pails on their heads, ingeniously placing sprays of leaves across the surface of the water to prevent it spilling. Many times had they to go back and forth till enough was procured.

On the washing morning the women came from the village. Their scanty loin cloths, browned by the red soil, which dyes everything it touches, matched their chocolate-coloured skin. Some had babies tied on their backs. Then we all marched single file down the narrow path that led to the Linje, the women and girls carrying everything necessary to serve our purpose. About a hundred yards distant stood the brick-shed, which was little more than a grass roof, being open at each end. A fire was lit at the side of the path where the long grass had been cut down. The two paraffin tins filled with water were placed carefully on the top of it, supported by stones.

I acted as gaffer, a most unpleasant job. The women and girls knelt in front of their tubs, rather the zinc baths I fortunately had. Each baby hung content on its mother's back. Bigger babies, two or more years old, played in the bush outside. There was no likely danger from wild beasts at that time of day as the leopards and jackals prowl only at nightfall. The baboons never came very near us though we could hear them

chattering and laughing just like human beings far up in the bush. We could not see them though very likely they saw us.

But now the fire is burning pleasantly. The steam is rising from the tins. The washing is fairly begun. But how slowly the women rub the clothes. They are simply stroking them. Mele, the imaginative, is imitating a snake with a bolster-slip she has twisted, making it wriggle and splash through the frothy water while the women laugh provokingly.

"Lijoka" (*snake*), she screams, showing her white teeth while her eyes flash.

"Msanga" (*quick*), I cry angrily, but they laugh the more and continue as they began.

Now a child comes running in to take a suck from its mother's breast. This does not favour the work, as the little one is thirsty and the woman quite willing to nurse it. I understand now why the old women's breasts hang down like empty leather bags.

How hot it is. Even in the shelter of the shed it is sweltering. I sit on a deck-chair near the entrance and watch with one eye the women at the tubs, with the other, the tins steaming on the fire. A tin can only hold one sheet at a time. I go out frequently to push down with a stick the swelling, bulging cloth. The sweat is dripping

from my brow in spite of my Terai hat of double felt.

I return to the shed and sit down exhausted. How foolish those black women must think me, thus making a burden of my life. Have not they lived their simple life in mud huts and reared children healthy and strong, without all this fussing and striving? They are perfectly happy though their garments are meagre and very dirty. At times I am told they do take them to a stream and rub them with smooth stones in the water; but it cannot be often judging from their appearance.

Yet never had a language more words for washing than the Yao. It has "ku-chapa" (*to wash clothes*); "ku-nawa" (*to wash the hands*); "ku-sukusula" (*to wash the face*), and "ku-joga" (*to bathe the body*).

But while I am ruminating, something has attracted the women's attention—a little bit of lace on a garment—and they must all feel it and examine it thoroughly. They say it is "kusalala" (*pretty*) and I am supposed to be pleased.

When my patience is nearly exhausted the washing is finished. I sigh with relief, and gathering our belongings we start homewards. But when I come to inspect the clothes I find they are all smeared with a reddish-brown colour

through coming in contact with the women's dirty garments. There is nothing for it but to get more water and rinse them again.

That done they are spread out to dry on the scrubby bushes, for we cannot yet boast of a clothes' rope and clothes' pins. But a wind is rising and we must watch them carefully lest they be blown away.

I venture to rest for a few minutes on the verandah. I hear the baboons still chuckling in the jungle above us. I almost envy them. How happy they are in their simple innocence without ever a thought of a washing-day.

The day's work done, my brow relaxes once more. Again I sit in the verandah. The sun is setting rapidly. The vast plain below is like a sea of gold. Crushed heaps of clouds have fallen asleep on the horizon which is broken only by the sharp pointed hills looking dark against a background of chrome yellow. I hear the tinkling of glass from the dining room. Bwanali and Kasawala are setting the table for dinner. Although we are in Central Africa there is no reason that our table should not be home-like. The napkins will be folded nicely, and the glasses will all get an extra polish for Bwanali carries a towel over his arm.

I am very hungry. It is getting nearly time for me to dish the food. A boy carrying a bugle (lipenga) passes in front of the verandah and goes in by the little gate to my left and through the scrubby bush to the flag-staff. He mounts the rocks and lowers the flag. Then forth into the great stillness comes the bugle call.

I rise and go round the house to the kitchen. I enter and prepare to dish the chicken soup. I lift the lid. The soup is here right enough, but the chicken is gone. Kasaswichi, my assistant cook (Mlenga has gone on a journey) looks very solemn squatting there on the ground. He is such a poor looking object, for he has taken off part of his dress for coolness, that I hesitate to scold him.

"Where is the chicken?" I ask in Yao.

"Qualine" (*I don't know*), he answers.

"I suppose it has gone 'quenda jenda'" (*for a walk*), I say, trying to look stern.

He avoids my eye and looks graver than ever. What can I do but say like the native "Pangally kandu" (*It does not matter*).

CHAPTER VI

AJAULA'S FIRST HANDKERCHIEF

WE had quite a farm yard. Our flock of goats grazed on the hillside, and their " lichinga " (*pen*), stood beyond the back courtyard. They resembled our home goats in appearance, but not in disposition. When they saw you coming they rushed to meet you, all striving which would get nearest, and leaped up on you with their fore-feet against your breast in the friendliest manner possible. And if you had what they expected—some light brown salt from Lake Chirwa, they would lick it greedily out of your hand.

However, we did not get much milk. Possibly if we had superintended the milking ourselves it might have been otherwise. Perhaps the kids were left too long with their mothers, or the milk may have been pilfered by the boys. It is against the native custom for women to drink milk. The strange thing was that none of us seemed to have the energy to look into the matter.

A number of very small fowls picked up a living for themselves about the place. We had recently added to our stock a few Muscovy ducks. At present one was sitting on eggs in the big oven in the kitchen, along with a hen whose own eggs had been taken away and who insisted on keeping it company.

They must have been a most sociable lot for one day while I was with my boys in the kitchen, who should come waddling in, but the drake to see his wife.

To please the boys I said : " Ajise Che Mewati " (*Come in, Mr. Duck*), and they laughed merrily.

When the ducklings were hatched, both the hen and the duck came out with the little ones. They made straight to " England," but as the stream was nearly dry it did not trouble the hen much. After two days, however, the duck got tired of this state of matters, and left her ducklings. Not so the hen for she proved a devoted mother, staying with them till they were able to look after themselves.

Partly owing to the occupancy of the oven, and also as it was a perfect nightmare to me, the Msungu, always resourceful, invented a new oven for my benefit. He had it built in the middle of the back courtyard. It consisted of a large earthenware native pot, lying on its side, arched

over with brick with a chimney to carry away the smoke from the wood fire kindled in the flue behind. A broken lid from a tin travelling box, held by a stone, acted as door. The whole thing resembled the body and funnel of a locomotive.

The Msungu tested it one day when I was sweltering with my women and girls down at the brick shed. I heard his footsteps coming along the path, and the wearing burden of my sole responsibility lightened. There he appeared in the entrance, his face beaming with triumphant success, holding out a plate with a few delightful little cakes baked in patty tins by his own self.

After that many things were baked in our new oven, and they were all a success. Never, before or since, have I found such a good one. True, I had to go out in the burning sun or in the rain with an umbrella above my head while watching the baking; but what was that compared with the fiery breath escaping from that huge tunnel affair in the kitchen.

In every department the work had to be planned and re-planned. I profitted by my trying experience down in the brick shed. Henceforth I called the women from the village, the day before the washing, and gave them each a piece of soap to wash themselves and their wearing garments before coming to work. This plan worked very

well. They were delighted with the soap, and apart from the lesson in cleanliness, I seldom had to complain again of my newly washed clothes getting soiled.

My dish towels also were a source of trouble. I would find them on the floor of the verandah, which was covered with red dust, from the badly fired bricks, or scattered in the courtyard dirty and smeared with red soil. After much heart-breaking I eventually cut a large number from a bale of unbleached cotton, and gave out a fresh one each time they washed the dishes.

Talk of housework ! If any of our dusting home folk had their rooms roofed only by wooden rafters inhabited by boring insects, they might complain. Those little creatures were hard and lifeless looking, resembling the dark brown sheath of a beech leaf. A shower of the finest sawdust would plump on the first thing handy, or perhaps the insect itself would drop down the back of a neck without any warning.

Then the " mbamba " (*little ants*) would swarm into my cupboard by hundreds so that a pie, put in the night before, would be black in the morning. That cupboard, I ought to have described. It was the case of my bullock travelling chest-of-drawers, standing on a four-legged bench. I painted its doors with birds and flowers and a nice

green border. Our sideboard, too, deserves a word in passing. The Msungu made it out of a number of empty provision boxes, nailed fancifully together, and the whole painted green.

By this time I must have given the impression that the Msungu was an extraordinary man; but that is nothing to the other things he did. He made the most beautiful cabinet bookcase, also out of boxes, which I sketched for the benefit of the home folk.

True, when he was going to build up a recess in the room which had been the Doctor's, he went inside that recess, and started to nail on laths of wood in front of himself, till timely reminded that there would be no way of getting out if he continued. But then, even Sir Isaac Newton cut two holes in his door for his cat and kitten.

But to return to the "mbamba." To exterminate them was out of the question. They came in long troops, like an ever flowing stream. Ultimately, acting on the advice of the more experienced, we placed the legs of the cupboard in tins of water. This did as long as we emptied them frequently, otherwise, they crossed the water on the drowned bodies of their comrades.

As the days passed trials overcome made life easier. Still there was great scope for improvement. For one thing we were cramped for room.

As we could not put our girls outside in a dormitory, having no trustworthy person to look after them, we let them sleep under our dining room table, on a straw mat laid on the floor. Each girl wrapped herself in a red blanket, provided by us, and lay down, her head resting on her elbow, and, after many whisperings and gigglings, would fall asleep.

What with our boys and girls and the Doctor's boys, for he had separate ones to attend him, our house was rather crowded even by day. I don't know who proposed it, but it was thought better for all parties that the Doctor should have a house for himself.

We were sorry, for we three had been so happy and agreeable; but we arranged that he should have Masamani, our chief cook, and that he should come to us every afternoon to have tea, and every Sunday to dinner. He also bargained that we should dine with him each Thursday. Thus a little variety was brought into our quiet life.

At once the Doctor, spurred by the prospect of having a house of his own, started to make a sideboard. He was very skilful with tools, so a regular work-shop was made of the wattle and daub building we used for church and school. Yet it did not seem such a sacrilege, when we thought of the Carpenter in the village of Nazareth.

It was also an education for the boys for they were inclined to despise work ; and the sideboard grew more beautiful every day.

Soon a space was cleared a few yards from our bungalow ; holes were dug for the posts which were afterwards wattled with split bamboos and padded with dried grass. Then the women came to plaster the whole with mud.

It was then that our girls began to assume an air of importance. Indeed they looked of a different race from these poor women who, stripped nearly naked, mounted the short ladders to mud the walls of the Doctor's house. Yet they had been the same but a short time ago.

How proudly they walked past them with heads erect and an undue quantity of cloth hanging about their limbs, the under pieces pulled down, here and there, to show their wealth of garments.

More than once while I was dressing in my bedroom I would hear eager whisperings outside my door. I would call " Pitani," and the girls would come in, always with the same request, that I would send the women, who were mudding the house, for water instead of them.

This generally happened when the Msungu was absent from the Station, and, with my insane idea of discipline, the request was always refused. They obeyed without complaint. Meekly they returned

to the dining room. I would hear the rattle of the pails from the side of the filter, then the soft patter of feet along the verandah, and they were gone.

Yet they were kind hearted too. A young married girl, about Mele's age, used to come frequently to our Station to visit our girls. Then Mele would get her book and slate and, sitting on the ground in front of the house, would teach her all she knew herself. It was interesting to watch her eager explanations and to see the contrast between the two faces, showing what example and education can do even in a short time : the dark soulless expression on poor Ndendemele's face—the bright look of enlightenment on Mele's.

One day some natives brought us a tiny jackal. The Msungu bought it for me, not being aware that I hate to see wild animals in captivity. As he was paying the men round at the store, two little bits of cloth, one white, the other navy blue, were left over.

Seeing Ajaula casting longing eyes at the remnants, the Msungu handed them to her. She seized them gladly, and immediately came to me for a needle and a thread. Receiving them she disappeared from my view and I thought no more of it.

About eight o'clock every evening we had prayers and a hymn or two in the dining room.

Our boys and girls took a kneeling posture round the table on which they rested their elbows. Several natives from the villages came also and squatted on the floor near the door which in the hot season always stood open. The room was lit by a paraffin lamp, its light barely reaching the corners where dark eyes flashed and white teeth glittered.

The short service over we let them amuse themselves. Sometimes they told stories, which greatly assisted us in learning the language. One night Mele told us about Brer Rabbit with all his tricks to deceive the fox. She told it so graphically, moving her hands and making sounds with her mouth, that though I could understand but a few words, I could hear Brer Rabbit laughing and knew that the fox was running away to its hole discomfited. And at that time I had never heard or read of Brer Rabbit.

Occasionally they were allowed to have a dance, though certain dances were forbidden. Then the large native drums were brought out to the back courtyard. An old woman would advance first and they all would follow, walking in a bent posture one behind the other, each carrying something, though it might be only an empty tin, and go through strange figures to the solemn beat, beat of the drums.

Had the sound of the drums, or the sight of the fantastic dancers in the moonlight infected us with a like festive spirit? For as soon as the natives dispersed, the Doctor, Msungu and I, staid missionaries supposed to be, would run round the Station in a game of hide and seek.

The evening of the day on which Ajaula received the little pieces of cloth we assembled as usual in the dining room for prayers. A hymn was given out. The whisperings of the natives ceased. Sweet and hearty rose their voices. That finished, the Msungu began the lesson. But there was a restless movement from Ajalua who knelt close by me. She fumbled suspiciously in the waist of her garment, while casting proud glances at the natives near the door. Then she drew up her hand, holding a handkerchief, the very first she had ever had, probably the first possessed by a Mlanje girl. It was unique in design, being oblong, with a centre of unbleached cotton and a border of navy blue muslin.

I am afraid I smiled. The Msungu, opposite me, read solemnly in the stillness—

"Wapali mundu, juamtume kwa Mulungu, lina lyakwe Yohana."

(*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*)

"Poomph, poomph—poomph." Ajaula had started to blow her nose. The Msungu continued

the lesson. Ajaula continued her blowing, in soft little crescendos.

I dared not catch the eye of the Doctor who sat staring impassively at our hapless sideboard of deal boxes, as if he were drawing hopeless comparisons.

It was a proud time for Ajaula. No doubt in her vivid imagination she was picturing the jealous looks of the other natives, especially the villagers ; but she was too much engaged to see them.

The Msungu at last finished the reading. Ajaula had not finished her nose, but continued those vain exuding noises through all the prayer that followed.

CHAPTER VII

THE BROKEN DRUM

THE little jackal which the natives brought us was very timid, being fresh from the jungle. For the first few days it would fly from my sight and hide under the nearest available object; but at last I tamed it with Swiss milk which it could not resist. It was a neat little perky creature with erect ears and a small sharp nose. One day as I bent to feed it in the verandah, where it lived under the garden seat, it gave its first indication of friendliness by licking my face. It also made a friend of the Doctor's dog, an animal of half native breed.

One night, after going to bed, we heard the loud howl of some wild beast in front of the house. The Msungu, in spite of my protestations, sprang up, seized his revolver, and ran outside.

I was accustomed to these sudden departures. Sometimes we would be disturbed by a storm of angry voices from the vicinity of the boys' dormitory, and I would be left alone. Generally I put

on my dressing-gown, lit a small paraffin stove which smelt badly, and made some coffee to drink on his return, in case he would be chilled by the night air or drenched by the rains which were now threatening. Then I would sit up on my bed and listen anxiously, feeling all the worse that I didn't know what was happening. On one of these occasions it thundered so terrifically that I ducked my head under the bed-clothes.

This time he returned soon. He had seen distinctly in the moon-light, a large wolfish-looking animal, nose to nose with our little jackal, and had refrained from firing thinking it might be its mother.

Shortly after this when I went to feed my pet it growled and showed its teeth. I suspected at once that it must have eaten some flesh for I had kept it on milk diet. True enough, the boys admitted having given it the entrails of a fowl. I was not sorry for it gave me an excuse to let it go. As soon as it was dark we set it free, and it ran straight towards the bush.

I think the Doctor's dog missed it, and it, poor thing, had need of comfort for it was badly bitten by grass ticks. These hard flat insects, resembling nothing more solid than a blot of ink, fastened themselves on the skin, till gorged with blood they looked like large red beads, when

they had to be pulled off by main force. They stuck on my skirt when I went through the narrow paths and caused me great discomfort. Invariably at dinner one would seize me under the knee, and I dared not cry out in case I would shock the Doctor. Ultimately I got the girls to pick them off my dress, immediately I came in from my walk.

About this time the sister of Namonde, the chief, died. Preparations for a big "maliro" were begun. An extra drum was borrowed from the natives of the Banana village near the Linje stream. For three days and nights the death festival was held. The drums beat rapidly, accompanying the yells of the dancers. It haunted us all day as we went about our tasks. We heard it in the night watches and were lulled to sleep again by the weird sounds.

During this time we anxiously watched our girls lest they should be tempted to join the death revels. The natives are very secret about their ceremonies, especially the "Nyago," which is said to end in an immoral dance. So our anxiety was the greater knowing that our girls were not like our innocent children at home. Mele must have gone through the Nyago when she changed her name from Soyaga to Mele.

But the maliro seemed not to affect them. They went about the house trilling their soft little songs,

and crept under the table each night with many chuckles and whisperings. Possibly the new and wonderful life in the Mission shadowed for a time the pleasures in their village. And we were glad, thinking that already we had got a grip of them, little dreaming how soon another and a worse dance would entice them away.

But the troubles of the maliro were not yet over. One day, shortly after, the chief men from the Banana village came to the Msungu in great wrath and excitement. He must be their judge, they were only children, they said. So they squatted down in our verandah and told their story: the drum which they had lent to Namonde's people had been returned broken. What were they to do? Namonde would not give them a new one.

Day after day the Msungu sat patiently listening to them, and suggesting this thing and that, while they waxed warm and talked, and talked, always the same thing over again. Indeed it seemed a "Magambo" (*lawsuit*) that would never end.

Though the price of a drum is only two yards of cloth, according to native value, yet it is the most important musical instrument in Central Africa. There are many shapes and sizes, from the huge war drum, made from the hollow trunk of a large tree, to the tiny drum which is held

against the breast and beaten by the fingers. One particular feature of the African drum is the manner in which the natives manage to tighten the skin of the drum-head. This is done by taking advantage of the peculiar property of rubber which contracts by heat. On the drum-head a number of patches of rubber are fixed. Before using the drum it is held near a fire whereupon the rubber contracts and makes the skin perfectly tight, literally "as tight as a drum."

At last the "Magambo" seemed to have ended. The men came no longer. All was quiet at the Station. Indeed it seemed as if the natives approved of our way of living. About a stone's throw from the little church stood two mud huts, side by side, inhabited by two married couples who had contrived to imitate our home in every way possible. In front of each was a garden fenced like ours with latticed railing in which were planted pumpkins, etc. They had also cut a neat path up to their doors, an unusual thing, for the African never thinks of making roads, but allows them to make themselves.

In our garden grew a mass of "Love-lies-bleeding" with flowers of enormous size which had spread through the fence. A spray of these one of the happy husbands carried home to his wife, a little attention the native is not at all addicted to.

No wonder that whatever fears we had were quieted. The natives had certainly been vindictive and vicious in the past, but there had been no Mission then on Mount Mlanje.

Yet surely it was the lull before the storm. One morning, just as I was dressing, we heard the unusual sound of men racing past the house. I ran to the window, and drawing aside the muslin screen, saw a number of natives, practically naked, with bodies bent forward, spears held out in readiness, running madly in the direction of Namonde's village.

The Banana villagers were on the warpath.

It was impossible to stop them, though the Doctor had once prevented a massacre on a small scale, by giving the would-be fighter a strong opiate, on the pretence that it was a medicine that would help him. We could only hope that Namonde's people had got timely warning for the women and children to fly to the mountains.

Indeed it proved so. When the enraged enemy burst into the village only a few fowls flew cackling in terror. Not a soul was to be seen. The banana bushes fluttered gently their fringed leaves in the sunshine. Little birds with red breasts hopped from twig to twig. A bell bird from afar uttered its clear note, one tender chime, like a church bell stirred by a passing breeze.

But alas! a little tell-tale smoke oozed from a hut. The Banana villagers rushed in and speared a sick man, the only one left. Next, they wreaked their vengeance on the fowls. What a cackling and fluttering there was; but they were soon hushed. Yet their wrath was not appeased. Wildly they looked round for something more to destroy. The earthenware pots still stood as they had been left, some containing "ugali" (*native porridge*), others, shredded leaves and flowers for the "mboga" (*relish*). These they shattered to atoms. Then they sallied back triumphant along the twining sunny path to the Banana village; and we never heard another whisper about the drum the cause of the trouble.

It was a little matter, hardly worth speaking about. Our girls and boys showed no signs of disturbance. Mele and Ajaula went "quenda jenda" in the afternoon. They found a soft mound of earth and dug out a little grey mole which they brought home and placed on the verandah steps. Then they poked their fun at it, pushing it here and there, laughing at the poor creature's efforts to get away till my heart grew sick, and I tried to stop them, though I did not see them actually hurt it.

The boys played at "Mpela" (*ball*) in the back

courtyard making a deafening din when they thought that the Msungu was out of hearing. And when later I went to the kitchen to see after the cooking I found Kasawala, Kambona and Kasaswichi making a feast for themselves: eight or nine field mice skewered on a stick, roasting over the fire.

But a change was in the wind—for us and for Namonde's people. Whether it was that their houses and goods had suffered damage, or that the proper time for their migration had come, I don't know; anyhow, they began to build a new village at the foot of the mountain near the Lekabula river.

The natives work their gardens till the ground is exhausted, then, instead of manuring them and making them fit for new crops, they cultivate fresh land a little further away, till gradually they get too far from their village for convenience. Then they remove altogether to a new part of the country.

We, also, were contemplating a "flitting," or rather the Doctor was. His house was now finished. The final white-wash had been put on inside since there was no time to make the elaborate lining of Iwalli palm as had been done on ours. But it looked very nice with French casement windows, which had been carried

complete from the Mandala Store, near Blantyre Mission.

So one day the Doctor removed his belongings and I lost no time in transforming his room into a little drawing room. I had some pretty art muslin with a Chinesy blue and red pattern which I made into window-sash curtains, trimming each with a narrow frill of Turkey-red cotton. On the floor we spread native matting with a skin here and there. A single bed made a nice couch by day covered with a travelling rug and a large leopard skin. The Msungu's famous cabinet, filled with books and topped by two Chinese vases, stood opposite the window. One or two little tables completed the furnishing. As for pictures, I cut them from magazines, and framed them, minus glass, with split branches of Illwai palm, nailed crosswise at the corners.

Meanwhile the Doctor was hard at work finishing his sideboard. He asked me to help him in designing the back; so much pleased I cut out a shape in brown paper and took it down to his "work-shop."

What a change it was having another house near us. We were perfectly childish in this new interest. The Msungu and I would often pay the Doctor a ceremonious visit. We would knock at his door and await his coming, when he would

shake hands as if we had not seen him already twenty times that day. Then he would ask us in his politest manner to come in. We would sit down and discuss the natives, which one always does in Africa instead of the weather.

Then I would say in a loud whisper to the Msungu: "I wonder when he is going to offer us cake and wine?"

At this remark, with a smile on his lips, the Doctor would go over to his sideboard and pour us out some soda-water from his gasogene, and we would drink his health and be right jolly.

An amusing rivalry arose between the Doctor's boys and ours. Each day they had a heated discussion as to which had the best furnishings. When at last our boys seemed to be getting the best of it, Kambona, the Doctor's little table-boy, ran forward shouting: "Pangally bell" (*There is no bell*).

It was quite true. They had scored this time; and for long afterwards they called derisively to our boys—"Pangally bell."

CHAPTER VIII

WE EXPLORE THE MOUNTAIN

ONE day the Msungu and I strolled up the mountain to a primeval forest, composed chiefly of huge mahogany trees. I had never been so far before. With intense interest we ventured a little way into its gloomy shade and found traces of a native cemetery. On the mossy turf lay several small earthenware jars, turned upside down, each having a hole cut in it to keep away the witches who, the natives believe, come in the form of hyænas or other wild beasts to eat the bodies.

Though some authorities declare that there are natives in this part of Africa with that abnormal appetite, we saw nothing of it ourselves; but from certain incidents which happened during our stay there, we were led to believe that cannibalism does exist in a few cases.

For instance, it was commonly asserted that our chief Namonde had eaten his child by a slave wife. Some of our boys believed us capable of this abominable practice ourselves. When a very stout white man, a land surveyor, called by the natives "Che Chimimba" (*Mr. Big Stomach*) visited our Station and stayed in the Doctor's house, Kambona, who was then table-boy there, fled in terror lest he should be eaten by the fat man. And another time when the Msungu was smoking a piece of wild boar in a barrel, a boy believed firmly that the "nyama" (*meat*) was one of his comrades.

But these were early days in the mission. A very few months worked wonders in gaining their confidence.

What a strange, awed feeling it gave one standing beneath those ancient trees, their long hanging creepers veiling with emerald threads the blue depths of the forest. What sights had been enacted beneath them? And those graves swept over by the mountain winds, laughed at by the monkeys playing from branch to branch, and trodden by the wild beasts in search of prey, how quiet they seemed, how forgotten.

I would fain have stayed a little longer, but the Msungu thought it hardly safe, nor dared I remove one little pot though I wanted to. So we drew

ourselves through the tangled creepers, and leaving the shadows of forest and tombs, emerged into the sunlight, as probably all who lay in those graves had done—dying without the hope of a resurrection, and awaking to light and life on the other side.

A sweet perfume came subtly and swiftly past us, and there, growing by our path, was a bush laden with a mass of blossoms like creamy hyacinths, both in form and odour. It was the only one of the kind we saw during our stay on the mountain. I was so delighted with every new plant I found that the Msungu promised to take me a picnic up the hill, just to explore, the very first day we were perfectly free.

That opportunity came ere very long. One afternoon we heard the boys shouting : " Msungu alimkwisa " (*A white man is coming*).

It proved to be Mr. John Moir, from Mandala, a well-known planter in these parts. He had been along the mountain searching for a site for a new plantation. The spot he had fixed on was about ten miles distant. He intended, very soon, to bring his wife and child to be our neighbours, a glad anticipation for me.

As each traveller in Central Africa carries his bed—a mattress and blanket rolled in a waterproof

case—we had no occasion to provide one. Our boys who had heard of Mandala, as they called our guest, thought him a very big man and were greatly excited. A few minutes after his arrival, much to our surprise, they appeared in the dining room dressed in long white Arab shirts, which the Msungu had recently given them to wear at church, or important occasions. Kasawala, Namonde's son, wore in addition a red Fez cap which gave him quite a distinguished look, a proof that dress and a self-consequent manner can make a very plain face seem almost handsome. Indeed, I hardly knew them for my own boys.

What a change a few months' teaching and training had wrought. With quite a business-like air they laid the table, arranging to advantage my best china and silver, polishing each tumbler as they set it down. A rich milk pudding and preserved pears, accompanied by goats' milk, and followed by tea and scones made the repast, a simple enough lunch, yet the boys waited in stately silence as if it had been a lordly feast, and they accustomed to the duty all their lives.

Next morning as our visitor had to depart about five a.m., I got up at half-past four. It was quite dark so I lit the lantern and went out to arouse the boys. They were all astir. They do not breakfast early themselves, but generally they

eat potatoes, roasted in the hot ashes, while preparing a meal.

What a bustle there was! Tins were opened and their contents heated. Every bit of food, left over from yesterday, was utilised in some way or other. The boys, headed by myself, made quite a procession carrying in the dishes.

That meal over I packed a "lukalala" (*basket*) for the "ulendo" (*journey*) with a roasted fowl, some girdle scones spread with jam and a few lemons which a native had found growing wild by the Lekabula river.

Our guest gone, a long day lay before us. The Doctor at once went down to work at his sideboard. The Msungu looked at me. I looked at the Msungu.

The morning was glorious. Not a cloud stirred the sky. Up the Lekabula valley distant waterfalls glistened in the sunshine. The great hills, warm tinted with pinks and yellows, their ledges and hollows purple and grey, showed sharp against the pale blue sky. On a far distant peak three solitary trees stood distinct against the horizon, like living figures beckoning to us.

Why should we stay here and work in the heat, day after day? A picnic! Why not? We both thought of it at the same moment. But where?

Still the trees seemed beckoning towards us as if pointing to a valley below them. Chentambo's village. The very place.

"It is the most primitive spot in the world," said the Msungu, as he sat, native fashion, on the verandah, his knees near his chin. "The worst village here is civilisation compared to it; and it is only a step up the hill, just about eight miles or so."

I smiled. The Msungu did exaggerate at times. How could any place be more primitive than this? But I hurried into my bedroom, and discarding the warm clothes I had worn in the morning, donned a pink blouse and a grey gingham skirt. Then I packed a canteen with all it could hold, put the rest into a basket, and instructed the boys, who were to remain at the Station, about the Doctor's lunch.

In a few minutes we were walking along the side of the hill, three of our boys, one carrying a gun, and the girls accompanying us. Then gradually we ascended the mountain through wooded paths so narrow that we had to walk single file. We crossed the beds of many streams bordered by Iwalli palm trees. They were mostly dry at this season. Sometimes the girls would run to a tree and gather msukas, a round fruit with a brown rough rind filled with sweet juice and four hard

stones, and bring them to us. Soon our path grew steeper and twisted between gigantic rocks which shot up from the tall grass. With the agility of a goat Mele sprang on a boulder, holding a spear in her hand. For a minute she stood against the blue of the sky for all the world like an African Queen.

How hot it was, and everything seemed parched and hot like ourselves.

At last we came to a stream, like a Scottish burn, which flowed entirely over rocks. We sat down on a flat stone. Above us to our right, a waterfall leaped down to its dark green pool. Opposite us, at the other side of the stream, was a large tree fern amid a mass of vegetation—waving bamboos, creepers and drooping orchids. Beneath, the Maiden Hair, the Royal, and the Asparagus ferns grew prolific.

The boys lit a fire and we soon quenched our thirst with hot tea. After lunch we searched for gold and precious stones in the bed of the stream ; but the glittering sand I gathered with rapture and showed to the Msungu, he declared callously to be mica. I met the same discouragement when I found *my diamond.* It was lying alone on the earthy path, and was about the size of a hazel nut, and cut like the stopper of a cruet. Of course the Msungu damped all my enthusiasm by

calling it a rock crystal. Yet it cut glass beautifully, but as it was lost like everything else, there is no way to prove it, and my husband still asserts his opinion.

As we were searching for treasure we noticed a large crab in a tiny cave of rock. It stoutly defended itself against every attempt to touch it. Then a strange sound attracted us—a loud shrill barking which seemed to come from one of the high trees above us. We looked up rather alarmed, but could see nothing to account for it. The barking continued wildly, making the rocks echo. Then I noticed in a pool, under the water, a large frog evidently labouring under intense excitement, its brown and yellow body panting rapidly.

Whatever caused the sound I do not know, but we hastened out of our cool retreat and up the steep bank to the streak of red path. Up, up, we went, climbing round sharp corners, dipping into shady dry water-courses. We seemed beyond human habitation. Not a creature we met save a blackish-green beetle about three inches long and it took no notice of us. Yet we knew that we were in the haunts of baboons, leopards, jackals and the "coneys that make their dwelling among the rocks." Of the latter we had had some experience. In narrow crevices, impossible for

man to reach, these brown furry creatures, resembling large rabbits, take up their abode. The Msungu used sometimes to hunt them, but oftener than not they disappeared into the cleft of some large boulder, much to my satisfaction, for I am no sports-woman.

But alas ! one day he was successful, and we had one to dinner. The result was unpleasant. I made no remark but gingerly ate it, till the Msungu pushed it from him demanding, for any sake, a tin of meat. So I went into the store off our bedroom and fetched a tin of salmon, hoping that this would be a lesson for him in future to leave the poor conies alone.

But to go on with our excursion ; at last we saw the first sign of human habitation—a plot of maize, and further on a grove of bananas, then the village—a few huts scattered irregularly in a hollow between two peaks of the mountain.

The head man, as was the custom, approached us diffidently, and gave us the ordinary salute of " Moni Atati ; Moni Amao " ; then walked a few paces away, and with the other villagers stared at us stupidly. Indeed, the Msungu was right, they were the most primitive, savage-looking people I had yet seen. Even our boys and girls held aloof from them, stationing themselves as near us as possible, and holding their noses in

the air as if they were beings infinitely superior.

It is surprising the contempt the natives have for their own race. The greatest insult a boy could give another was to call him a "Blackie man." I remember one day, Mele came running into our dining room and told us that Kambona had thrown at her this designation. All explanation on our part proved useless. She leant against the doorway, her pretty head thrown backwards, her lips pouting, and her bosom heaving with indignation.

The Msungu called Kambona in, and told him to tell Mele that he was sorry. He positively refused, the first and only time a native directly disobeyed him. Then the Msungu, smothering his laughter, made him kneel down and bade him say: "I myself am a blacky man."

The big tears rolled down his cheeks, but he kept silent.

While we rested there, under the rude gaze of this strange people, a young man with a particularly stupid appearance and low cast of countenance, came nearer than the others and, squatting down, stared and gaped at us. Suddenly a hungry-looking hen ran past him with a dead rat hanging from its mouth. He sprang up, furious with rage, and raced after it. On flew the hen, not daring to cackle lest she should drop the



DISTANT VIEW OF MOUNT CHIRADZULO.

[*Face p. 87.*

rat. The savage followed, like Jack the giant killer in his spring boots, with great strides and his body bent forward. An avalanche of stones rained towards the fowl, but the rat was much too precious to relinquish. The fellow gave in with a curse and threw himself lazily on the ground. Evidently the rat had been a tit-bit reserved for his dinner.

On our way home I painted a small water-colour sketch of the plain far beneath us with the hill Chiradzulo, near Zomba, in the background. To the right in the foreground rose one of the sharp rocky peaks of our mountain.

We were very tired as we neared our Station, but my hand was full of white flowers, like primroses and long sprays of Asparagus ferns. The Doctor was standing at the door to welcome us with that quiet hidden smile of his, which perhaps had more depth than the boisterous gushing welcome.

CHAPTER IX

THE VICTIM

I WAS curious to see the Banana village, not only because its people had shown themselves so revengeful, but because it had been the scene of a particularly painful case of the Poison Ordeal —the drinking of the mwai.

When the Msungu first came to Mlanje he wondered why he saw so few old people. After he had learned more of the language he found it was due to the Mwai custom. When any one dies the natives think it the result of witchcraft. They believe that wizards and witches charm people to death so that they may feast on their bodies after they are laid in the shadow of the thick trees of their burying place.

Who are the witches? Every one is suspect. The neighbour, the father, the mother, the wife or child may be the guilty person. This is the tragedy of native life. Each one lives in fear and suspicion of every one else.

After a death the relatives send for the witch-finder, who comes to the village with his bag full of things absurd and horrible, such as Burns imagined in *Alloway Kirk*. Then he dances until he appears frenzied, when he rushes to the woods, where he pretends to find horns which tell him the name of the wizard or witch.

He usually fixes on an aged, worn-out person, or some one unpopular with his neighbours. The people seize their victim, accuse him of witch-craft, and force him to drink the mwai. As a rule the unfortunate person is quite willing to do so, for like all the others he has perfect faith in the ordeal. If he vomits the poison he lives, and is pronounced innocent ; if he dies he is said to be guilty.

At that time there had been a great deal of smallpox in the Banana village, and several of the children died. The people said : "Some one is bewitching us."

So they performed the usual rites, and fixed on the headman of the village—Che Chagula, the oldest man in that part of the country.

Often he had passed through the Mission court-yard. His grizzled head, his long white beard, his staff, and the monkey skin bag he always carried, gave him a picturesque appearance.

The Doctor and the Msungu were seated at

breakfast when they heard of the Banana villagers' intention. They rose at once, seized their revolvers, and hurriedly followed the messenger to the place of the ordeal. After some trouble they found the spot ; but they were too late. The people had seen them approaching and had fled, carrying their victim with them.

The white men followed hard on the trail, missed it in the middle of some maize gardens, found it again, and again missed it. The terrible sun beat down on their heads till, fairly exhausted, they sank down by the side of the path, unable to go further.

When they were sufficiently rested, very slowly and silently they returned home. In the evening they heard the guns fired from the Banana village in token of joy that the wizard, poor Che Chagula, was dead.

No wonder that I was anxious to see the place. So one afternoon the Msungu and I started out by a lower path than the one we usually took to the Linje. The Banana village, a cluster of little mud huts, half hidden in a grove of banana bushes, their long leaves fringed by the Mlanje winds, lay about a quarter of a mile from the stream. How lovely it was, just a picture of peace and contentment.

The villagers were all pleased to see us. The

usual greetings: "Moni Atati, Moni Amao," passed, and several came forward with presents of eggs and sweet potatoes.

The people seemed good-natured and guileless. It was difficult to believe that, urged by superstitious fears, they had actually murdered an old man, who had for many years been the father of their village. His own wives, children, and brothers were among those who had sought his life.

We did not stay long, nor did we, I think, accept any of their presents. Lovely as the spot was, I was not sorry to leave it. For in the midst of that light-hearted throng, women resting from the pounding of the corn to eye me curiously, children playing at "cat's cradle" on their fingers, and men basking in the sunshine or plaiting reeds, I fancied I saw the spectre of an aged bent figure with grizzled hair and a long white beard, his dim eyes gazing reproachfully at the careless company.

"Why is that hut all boarded up?" I asked the Msungu.

"The body of old Che Chagula is buried inside," he answered softly.

We returned slowly up the hill. The great rocky peak of Mlanje loomed ahead of us,

like a gigantic heathen god gazing stonily on its worshippers.

A short distance from the Banana village, a little below the path, stood a solitary hut. In it dwelt old Kuchilapa, his wife and son. We went down to see them, and they welcomed us gladly. Then the good lady, who wore a necklace of animal's teeth and other queer objects, powerful charms to keep away witches, bustled into her house, leaving us sitting on a stone in front. The son darted across the yard, and hastily removed several large stones which were propping up the door of a small hut. We watched him curiously.

Suddenly he drew out six or seven little pups, and gathering them all in his arms, brought them over for our inspection. They were nice little pups, and nothing in their appearance suggested an untimely end. But an evil star seemed to be over the dogs at this time, as my story will show.

But here Mrs. Kuchilapa comes out of her house and diverts our attention. She carries a large earthenware bowl filled with "ugali," (*porridge*). She asks us to taste it. We express our pleasure and she lays on the ground a straw mat on which she places the "ugali" and a wooden plate containing the "mboga" (*relish*) which to-day consists of stewed Zebra flesh, a rare food even with the

natives. Then she holds out a jar in which to wash our hands before eating.

Out of compliment we taste the "ugali," but of the Zebra we had already received a piece from the same hunter who had supplied Kuchilapa.

There are few natives who are hunters in that part of Africa. Although there was no game license at that time, and the whole population longed for fresh meat, only one or two men on the mountain really hunted. At rare times we would receive a bit of harte-beeste, klipbok (*wild goat*) or eland. Many of the natives possessed old guns which they had got from traders. The Msungu would supply them with powder when we wanted a piece of flesh food. He, himself, sometimes brought me in a partridge or two, fine plump ones, for breakfast or dinner.

As I remarked before, we were an exceedingly sociable family, including our goats, ducks, etc., but I did not mention the kindly disposition of our fowls. Not content with their own quarters, or possibly because they wanted to be near us, they would roost nowhere except on our bedroom window-ledge. It was a window higher from the ground than those in front of the house, and situated in the gable end. How pleasant it was to hear their cluck, cluck, and flutter, as they passed the time of night to each other, or changed

places, just as we turn on our other side. It was a home-like sound and helped us to forget how far we were from civilisation.

One night, about a week after our visit to Kuchilapa, we were awakened by a loud cackling and fluttering among our fowls on the window-ledge. Then we heard the sound as of something heavy fall on the ground. Twice this occurred amidst the convulsed cackling and screaming of the fowls. Then near the house came the ominous howl of a jackal, which explained matters.

A leopard, undoubtedly, was at the window.

But the doctor's dog had heard the sounds also. From its warm bed, from its little pups just two days old, it rushed furious to the rescue, barking loudly. The jackal howled again, a weird, impatient call. Then all was silent.

By this time the Msungu was standing at the high window peering out. He now seized his gun and ran through the dining room outside, closing the front door after him. I sat up in bed listening anxiously, but I only heard the quick tread of his feet round the house.

He was not long in returning. He had seen nothing. Everything seemed just as it had been before, only the friendly fowls had departed. It was difficult to sleep again, no pleasant cluck, cluck, cheered up the night watch.

How dark the room was. Then the rats began to run in the store off our bedroom. There seemed to be hundreds. Jingle, jingle, went the tins. Patter, patter, went their feet. Would my heart not beat slower ? Then I heard from the Msungu's breathing that he had gone to sleep. I turned on my other side and lost consciousness also.

Next morning the Doctor's dog was missing. The natives found the marks of a leopard under our bedroom window, and eagerly traced them to the jungle, where alas ! they found the poor dog's head.

They returned with their story. The Doctor said very little, but he accompanied the men back to the bush where he put a large dose of poison in the dog's head, hoping that the leopard would return to its prey when it grew hungry. But it never did, and our friend and companion was never avenged.

The pups unfortunately remained. What would we do with them ? Then it was Kambona had a happy idea. It seemed a providence. Kuchilapa's puppies had all died. The mother dog might nurse ours. So the little creatures were carried in a " lukalala " (*creel*) down to the little hut near the Banana village, and they found a mother who welcomed them as her own puppies come back.

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE HORN THAT DANCED

FOR a couple of days I had not felt very well, and towards evening the Msungu tried my temperature. It was 100°. He at once ordered me to bed and went to call the Doctor whom he found in his "workshop."

I was glad to lie down, I felt so tired. The Doctor came at once, sat down beside my bed, and taking my hand in both of his, spoke comfortingly to me, for I had taken my first fever, a common attack of malaria.

He ordered me a drink of hot gruel, and a warm bottle for my feet, while the quilt was pulled well over me for I shivered with ague. But soon I grew warm, hot, burning. I turned and tossed, and thought of my country home, and a clear cold spring that trickled from a spout into a stream covered with water-cress. It seemed to me that I had never taken advantage of it, never

drank it often or long enough. O, how I would drink it now.

Towards morning the perspiration broke out. What a blessed relief. My garments were soaking, but my skin felt cool compared with what it had been. When I had received a dry change I was able to enjoy breakfast without the worry of making it. How delightful it was to lie and do nothing. The Msungu, however, had to take my place in the kitchen. Bread had to be made as usual.

What a fuss he made. I could hear him running out and in, crying to the boys to fetch things. One might have thought that he was starting a baker's shop instead of making one loaf.

At intervals he would put his head into my room with some query or other—" Where is the baking powder ? " " Do you put paper inside the tin ? "

" We don't use baking powder, it has lost its strength. Take soda and lemon juice and never mind paper," I answer.

He turns away in a great flurry.

" See and remember to test it with a knife," I venture to call after him.

He puts back his head. Wrath is on his countenance. " Do you think I don't know how to make bread after being here so long without you ? " he retorts.

I shut my mouth, and try to think of the nice little cakes he made when we were washing. He disappears for a time. An age it seems.

By and bye he returns. His hands and coat are smeared with flour. "The wretched flour was full of weevils" he said. "I had to get Kasawala to sift it."

"How is the loaf?" I ask meekly.

"It has been in the oven a whole hour and is as soft as ever. Do you think it will ever come right?"

"You know best," I tell him, and laugh under the bedclothes.

It was evident that he had made the batter too thin. It took nearly three hours to fire; but it was wonderfully light and good when we tasted it. The Msungu was as proud as Punch. He referred to it at every opportunity, and was always dictating to me afterwards as to what I should and shouldn't do.

What with the loaf and the preparations for lunch I had not the chance of a snooze all the forenoon. Later in the day the Doctor came in with a cheery smile. He was delighted with my progress, and that I seemed to take fever so lightly. In the evening I was allowed up for a little, and donning my red dressing-gown I lay down on the basket-couch I had brought from

Madeira, covered with a rug and my crimson travelling cloak. By my side was a little table with my books, etc. A large lamp stood lit on the chest of drawers.

How interested the boys looked when they came in with my dinner. The door stood open, giving me a peep of the dining room where, though I could not see the gentlemen, I could hear them speaking.

"There may be some truth in it," said the Doctor. "No doubt there are cannibals among them, though more than likely Namonde's brothers just want him out of the way."

"We will make enquiries to-morrow," said the Msungu. "If we hear it's true, I'll send word to B—— (a Government Agent at one end of the mountain) and get him to take him away for a time, till his folk have cooled down a bit. We can't see him murdered like poor old Che Chagula."

"Ay, they are a queer folk," said the Doctor, shrugging his shoulders. "Tenga matimati, Kambona." (*Pass the tomatoes.*)

"Atole mapotichera" (*Pass the tomatoes*), said the Msungu when the Doctor had helped himself.

The Msungu spoke the Yao, and the Doctor the Manganja language. To explain this: there were two tribes on the mountain—the Yao and the Manganja, the former having conquered the

latter some years before. Thus I picked up a smattering of both languages as each of us at table had a boy as waiter, not that we required so many, but we had to find them work.

Kasawala came in to carry away my plate. He had a proud look though his features were very plain, his nose being squat and turned up, his upper lip long above a hard mouth. He looked longingly at a plate on which some potatoes and rice had been left.

"Asalasye?" (*Reserve it?*) he inquired. This little question was asked with all the dishes removed, and it was painful to disappoint them sometimes.

"Atyosye" (*Take away*) I said, and he ran out with the dish as fast as he could, lest I should change my mind.

Dinner over the Msungu came in. "Come here, Doctor," he called back, "and tell me if this luxury looks like Central Africa."

Then the Doctor appeared. "O Donna, Donna, this will never do at all, at all; you must remember we are only poor missionaries," he said smiling.

In a couple of days I was quite better. My first fever had indeed been slight. After this I was to have an attack every three or four weeks, each one of increasing severity. But fortunately I did not know that then.

Early one morning, shortly after my recovery, I was surprised to find Namonde, the chief, sitting on the seat in the verandah. He seemed not so smart as usual. His face was haggard. His brown silk parasol and white jacket had been left at home. A piece of cloth was carelessly twisted round his shoulders, and the blue muslin hung scantily from his waist. We shook hands, and I informed the Msungu of his presence.

He stayed a long time. When he had gone the Msungu told me that Namonde had been accused of witchcraft and his people were going to give him the "mwai." The chief had come up purposely to tell the Msungu, his friend, as he always called him.

Somehow I never had trusted him. Yet I had not thought him much worse than his neighbours; but now hearing his story more fully I understood my prejudice.

He had certainly an evil reputation. The natives said he had a magic horn. It had a little tail made of buffalo hair fastened to its point. They said it could dance in a wonderful manner. Away inside the semi-darkness of his hut he would take it from its hiding place, and say to it in his own language—

"Little horn, little horn, dance, dance, and make me able to give power to anybody I choose,

to cheat, rob and kill without being found out."

And the little horn, so they said, as soon as he laid it down on the mud floor, would dance on its tapered end, all round the hut many times, looking black and weird in the fitful light of the small wood fire. And old Namonde, the wizard, would sit back against the reddish wall, pulling his short black beard, and point with his finger in every direction the horn took. And then, when nobody else heard, the horn would tell him things.

Meanwhile the village people would be sitting in awed groups outside the hut. Perhaps one more venturesome than the others would peep through a chink in the door, then slip fearfully back on bare tip-toe, and with scared face whisper rapidly all that he had seen. And the old women would nudge the younger ones with their skinny elbows, and shake their heads till their large lip-rings wagged uncomfortably.

"He is a wizard," they said; "let him drink the mwai for he ate the child of Mati-mati." She was the slave wife of Namonde.

Whether the story was true or not the missionaries could not let him die like poor old Che Chagula. After talking it over the Msungu and the Doctor determined to go down to Namonde's village at the foot of the hill now,

and invite the chief to stay at the Mission Station for a time at least.

Looking over my correspondence at that time it seems wonderful how events fitted in. There happened to come to our Station, a day or two before Namonde's visit, a young man, an artisan missionary. It was arranged that he should keep me company and take charge of the Station while the Doctor and the Msungu were absent.

Their minds made up they started early next morning. Fearing no danger, they carried no weapon, but I, fearful and cumbered about many things, was very anxious until their return.

The day was very sultry. Great masses of ominous grey clouds hung round the extensive horizon of the plain beneath. Crossing a path beside the Station I was alarmed to feel a hot stifling air rising from the ground below me. I thought of volcanic eruptions, such as must have scattered those boulders, so grim and dark, o'er the face of the mountain. I hastily passed the spot, and tried to forget it.

I had much to do, and a good thing it was. A visitor was always a spur to make extra nice dishes, so I went early into my kitchen in the afternoon. There I saw a strange sight. Ndendemele, the companion of our girls, was dancing before our assistant cook, Kasaswichi. Inside the doorway

she advanced and retired in a squatting position while undoing and closing repeatedly a scarf wrapped round her breasts. Flap, flap, it went, revealing and hiding her beauties. Back she danced with affected modesty; forward again with ravishing smiles while little Kasaswichi, a plain-looking lad with face pitted by smallpox, sat entranced on the ground beside the fireplace.

As my shadow fell on the doorway there was a sudden change of scene. Ndendemele sprang up, looking very much ashamed, and Kasaswichi assumed his gravest expression.

I could not be angry, though I suspected that it was an immodest dance, as the wearing of a scarf round the breasts signifies pregnancy. That was one trouble I had with my girls. Occasionally I would find one using her red sash in this manner, and as they were unmarried I always checked them. But after all perhaps it was no worse than playing with dolls.

In the afternoon the clouds burst. A thunderstorm fought overhead. Then rain poured down, and a red stream rushed along the courtyard, while everyone ran with pails or vessels to hold the water. It was then that Masimani, the Doctor's cook, came running in. He made signs to me, raising his closed hands together till above his head, and then spreading them over his body.

I could not mistake him. The Msungu must be sheltering somewhere and wanted an umbrella and a waterproof.

It proved to be the case. Masimani beamed when I produced them, and with them galloped down the mountain. In due time the Msungu and Doctor returned, but without Namonde. They had found the chief calmly hoeing his little garden. He came forward to meet them, and they told him the cause of their visit. But he would not hear of leaving his village. "If I run away," he said, "they will say that I am guilty. I am not afraid. I will not die for I am innocent."

They left him reluctantly, and I was thankful to see them safely back. It was a time of great anxiety. One felt so powerless. Every evening we expected to hear the guns telling of the death of another wizard. But at last the Msungu heard definitely that Namonde was to drink the "mwai" next day, which was Sunday.

As a last resort my husband wrote to Mr. B—— of the Administration, telling him of the intended murder. The messenger was sent post haste that afternoon. There certainly was little time, but he could do nothing more.

Before retiring to rest that night I placed the Msungu's dressing-gown and boots beside the bed, as we fully expected a reply of some kind before

morning. Sure enough about two o'clock, in the pitch darkness, we were awakened by the sound of voices and a general disturbance outside. We hastily got up. It proved to be Mr. B—— and another white man with a force of Zanzibaries. They meant to capture the village that night and take as prisoners the chief instigators of the crime. But it was after sunrise when they got down. The villagers were all up and on the alert, so they could only take Namonde.

Finding himself a prisoner, he at once sent a pathetic message to his friend, the Msungu, begging him to help him. At once the Msungu called Kasawala, the chief's son, and bade him go and tell his father that the white men were only going to protect him, and that he need have no fear.

Consequently Namonde was taken to Mr. B——'s Station at the Linje side of the mountain, and we heard that he was going about quite happy and at peace there. In a few weeks he was allowed back to his home and people. His villagers' and relations, whether it was from fear or not, seemed to have given up their evil intention. But alas! it was only smouldering, like a hidden fire, ready to break out into sudden flame on a future occasion when Namonde's friend, the Msungu, was too far away to render any help, and the "mwai" would add another victim to its account.

CHAPTER XI

THE "KALAMUKA" RATS

AFTER a fortnight's visit, our guest, the artisan missionary, took his departure. I must say I was not sorry for he had given so much trouble handing me on his arrival a pile of clothes, including a white jacket, to be washed and ironed, and every day giving his boots to be blackened, evidently forgetting that he had come to a newly established Mission in the jungle with nothing but raw, untrained natives.

All extra work to them but added to my burden, as I had to stand over them to the bitter end. The girls took good-naturedly the washing and the ironing, but the boot brushing they simply hated, having never done it before, as we were content to wear our brown boots and canvas shoes.

But I struggled through though the perspiration dripped from my forehead. The work was

done, and accepted as a matter of course. Little he guessed what pain it cost me.

Very occasionally we had had other visitors, men accidentally passing on some work or other. They were content to rough it like ourselves, and always treated me with the greatest respect and consideration ; yet they were men, most of them, who made up for their solitude and the lack of white woman's society in a way highly disapproved of by the missionaries.

But the arrival of a white man was always rare enough to cause quite an excitement in our quiet lives. "Msungu, Msungu!" we would hear the boys shouting, for all white men are msungus to them.

Then we would run out, and sure enough there was a white man in a machilla coming up the road with his train of carriers appearing gradually as they reached our plateau.

One day two white men came to see us. One was a coffee planter called by the natives "Madzi-ku-samba" (*water to wash*), probably because these were the only Manganja words he knew at the time. He lived five miles beyond the Linje stream. The other gentleman was Mr. B——, the Government Agent, whose Station was some twelve miles further on the same side. They came all spick and span with the intention, as they said, to see a young billy goat which we had, but

in reality, as the Doctor informed me, to pay their respects to the "Donna." If that were the case she fully appreciated the compliment, knowing the trouble it must have been to secure a clean collar.

It was almost like old times. Excitedly I ran to the back of the house and called Mlenga, the cook. He appeared sleepily from the dormitory and shouted "Moto, moto!" (*fire, fire!*) and immediately his two little assistants came running with firewood.

Having given instructions for the kettle to be boiled for tea, I returned to the house to arrange the table. Congratulating myself that I had some little cakes, baked some days previously, I filled my cake-basket. I had also some scones, which Mlenga had made that morning. What though some of them were the shape of feet, they were none the less good, and were certainly more uncommon.

Bwanali, my table boy, was now assisting me, and we arranged them on a small afternoon table I had brought from home. It had low shelves exactly suited for my purpose. Then I returned to the verandah to enjoy the conversation of our visitors.

In a few minutes Bwanali appeared, carrying the steaming tea-pot, and entered the drawing

room by the French window. I leisurely followed him, and found to my surprise that there were only two scones left on the plate.

"Bwanali!" I said reproachfully, "Mikato ali kwapi?" (*Where are the scones?*)

He cast his head proudly back. "Kwaline," he answered shortly.

The Yao word "Kwaline" is one of the most provoking words in that language. It literally means "I don't know," but it is generally said in a "don't care" tone with a shrug of the shoulders that riles the questioner. But in my case, I was vexed and bitterly disappointed. Bwanali was our favourite boy. I would have trusted him anywhere. There was something noble in his face, a face with rather refined features.

Yet no one but himself had been in the room. Still, I would not accuse him, but never again would I have faith in any native.

I was turning away when suddenly I noticed a scone lying on the floor near the wall. In amazement I looked at Bwanali and saw that he had just discovered one under the table; and looking round we found several others.

"Makoswe!" (*Rats!*) said Bwanali triumphantly.

In my joy I put out my hand to pat the boy's shoulder, but he shrank from my touch. This rather damped my ardour. I meekly put out

fresh scones while Bwanali gathered up the fragments. Then I called my visitors, the Doctor and the Msungu in.

"What a treat," I thought, "these cakes will be to those lonely bachelors." And I might have lived in this delusion had I not discovered when my visitors had gone that the cakes were moulded. Thus I learned the lesson that in this climate I must bake oftener and in smaller quantities.

Hearing about the rats and the scones, Mr. B—— on leaving promised to send me a cat. We sorely needed one. The rats were awful. Once we awoke thinking that thieves were plundering us, there was so much noise in the store. The Msungu got up, lit the candle, seized his revolver and went to see what was the matter. There was a rattling and falling of tins, and the sight of several tails disappearing. Rats certainly!

He returned to bed; then I had a strange experience. The candle had been blown out. All was dark. Suddenly I felt that something, or some one, was holding me by the throat. I tried to cry out, but could not. At last I must have screamed for the Msungu asked me what was the matter. I told him, and he got up and searched the house again. They said it was a night-mare; but it seemed real enough to me.

The next day the rats were singing in the wall. They had quite a concert. We determined to get rid of them. In a corner of the dining room stood a large wooden box filled with native rice which was gradually disappearing. The Msungu had it emptied and filled with water, thinking that the rats would go in to feed as usual and be drowned. But they were too sly for that. Then he set native traps, somewhat similar to the wooden traps used by mole-catchers at home; but he only caught five.

Not only did they eat the food, but the feet of the natives were often badly bitten in their sleep. I, myself, was awakened one night by something biting my toes.

The Msungu once asked a boy why he did not awake when the rats bit him. "O, the rats are very 'kalamuka' (*cunning*)" he said. "They take a very little bite and blow on the place, then another and blow again on the place, so you don't feel the pain."

Two days after our visitors had gone I received a present of some large tomatoes from "Madziku-samba." I placed them in my store off our bedroom. Next morning they were all partly eaten by the rats. A fortnight after a box arrived containing a grey kitten from Mr. B—— with the following note:—

"DEAR MRS. C——

"Please accept this kitten with my best respects. It is none of your wild untameable native cats, but a fine perfect English Puss.

"Yours sincerely,

"B——"

It was a dear, little furry thing, quite justifying its character as far as appearance went, but it was the wildest, untame creature imaginable. I had recently got a black native cat, lanky and hungry, that had adapted itself to its surroundings and comforts of home, sleeping on my bed every afternoon, and hunting the green lizards along the verandah, making them drop their tails which wriggled away by themselves under the mat in the dining room. It scared the rats, and purred most delightfully.

It did its best to educate this fine "English Puss," and succeeded in getting it to share its siesta after lunch; but if I appeared the naughty puss would run off in terror.

One day the black cat was not to be found. I expect a leopard must have ended its existence the night before. The "English Puss" was quite disconsolate. I found it curled up on my bed in the afternoon. Instead of running away, as was its habit, it looked up at me with a wistful expression on its face, and allowed me to stroke it for the first time, while it actually purred.

I thought I had won it, but from that day I never saw it again. Possibly its camaraderie was greater than we imagined, and it had gone to join its companion in the "happy hunting grounds."

CHAPTER XII

MKANDA'S THREAT

IT was drawing near the end of the year. The weather was still very hot and sultry. Occasionally there had been a heavy shower of rain of short duration, generally accompanied by a gale of wind when all our baths and basins were placed under the edge of the thatched roofs, to catch as much water as possible, for " England " was still very dry.

I did not make any preparations for Christmas. For one thing I had not enough energy, and I had no other woman to plan with ; besides ceremony of every kind seemed to have grown such a small thing.

I did not realise then that the celebration of any happy event, be its manner ever so useless, does much to break the monotony of life, and helps us to live through the normal days with greater relish.

Surveying the majesty of the mighty landscape before us, the petty formalities at home seemed but an insanity, although I have heard missionary women in Africa discussing whether it would be good form or not to call on a certain person, a newcomer to the country; the dilemma having arisen by the husband of the lady in question, being somewhat free with native women. But these formalists were not alone, as I was, as far as white women were concerned, nor were they influenced by the grand Mlanje range.

Yet when Christmas Day dawned I had still a little sentiment left. I stuck sprigs of artificial holly, which I had brought from home, round the walls and in the vases, and we wished each other a merry Christmas, and thought more, if possible, of our absent friends.

The day being Sunday we went to church. A number of young native men came in, who insisted in sitting with their faces to the wall, much to my amusement. In the evening we dined together on the inevitable fowl.

"I tell you," said the Doctor, "the very first thing I am going to have when I get home, is a good bit of roast beef."

For some time the Doctor continued having his meals with us, as Masamani, his cook now, had



MKANDA'S COUNTRY.

(*Face p. 117.*

taken a holiday. Often he would say to me at breakfast: "I think, Donna, you should come down to the brick shed with me and learn shooting. One never knows when it might come in useful."

I laughed at first, thinking that he was joking, but at last, seeing he was in earnest, I said I might go some day. But foolishly I let the time slip past and did not remind him for I hated shooting, and could not bear the sound of a gun. Besides, I thought, what use could it possibly be to me? I did not want to shoot baboons like the Doctor, or partridges like the Msungu.

Still I might have been afraid for the wild chiefs with their war-like tendencies. The year my husband came out the great chief Chikumbu had made war on the mountain. And there was Mkanda who had sent a message to the Msungu, soon after he arrived on Mlanje, telling him that he was coming some fine day to cut his throat. I remember the exact spot where he told me the story. We had returned from a walk to Namonde's village, and were looking back just where the Doctor's house was built. In the near distance rose the great rocky peak of Mlanje, bare and awful in its grandeur; beneath it to the left the sloping undulating country, covered with scrubby bush where Mkanda lived.

"When I got that message," said the Msungu,

"I determined to visit him. I asked Namonde to accompany me, and we started one morning, the chief leading the way, carrying a long staff and his silk parasol in one hand, and in the other a small bag of squirrel skin containing tobacco, and the little clay jar of lime which he chews with it.

"I came next, carrying a light spear with my revolver slung over my shoulder. Behind me followed two of my boys and four men, carrying my belongings—a tent, bed, a box with a change of clothes, and a basket with pots, plates, etc.

"It was a delightful day, and our march along the mountain side brought us each minute to some new beauty. We passed through several pretty villages almost hidden in groves of bananas. But we did not stop, except to rest for a minute beside a stream, till we got to the village of Chiligogogo, a head-man of Mkanda's.

"Here we sat down in the open space in front of the huts. Very soon Chiligogogo came to see us and with him a man carrying a mat on which he and Namonde seated themselves.

"I was invited to the mat, but I preferred to sit on the root of a large tree. A present of sugar-cane was brought to us, and we talked and sucked the cane, and sucked the cane and talked for about an hour.

"From this place we sent a messenger to Mkanda to tell of our coming. Before long he returned to say that Mkanda would be pleased to see us.

"After a stiff climb we reached Mkanda's village where we found the chief, a very fat old man, seated on a mat smoking. Around him in a circle sat his head-men.

"The chief stared at me, but kept on smoking, nor did he say a single word. This looked bad for the native is usually very polite. I saw I must brave it out, so I seated myself on a stone opposite him, took out my burning-glass, which I always carry with me, and, holding it up to the sun, soon lit my pipe.

"Immediately Mkanda's expression changed. He smiled all over and rose to welcome me with the usual 'Moni Atati.'

"I asked a place to pitch my tent, and he pointed to an open space in front of his own house. In a few minutes the canvas was erected. My cook lit a fire and made my tea.

"In the afternoon I had a long chat with Mkanda, and we exchanged presents, and he promised to send a few of his children to stay with us. But I don't know what would have happened if I had not produced my burning-glass. Probably he thought that a man who could

bring down fire from Heaven to light his pipe might as easily get some more to annihilate himself and his whole tribe."

The Msungu laughed when he had finished his story, and I foolishly thought that the danger was past, and yet I might have known that Mkanda was only one of a number of wild chiefs on Mount Mlanje. For instance, there was Matapwiri, on the other side of the mountain, famous for his fierce raids. Little I dreamt that Mkanda's threat was but the shadow of the event which would end our stay on the Hill of Good-bye.

I know now that the Msungu made light of many things not to alarm me, although he never dreaded the worst. I think the Doctor had a keener presentiment, as he said in after years: "We were just as safe out there as if we had been sitting on a powder barrel."

So I neglected that valuable lesson down at the brick shed, and went about by day, and lay down on my bed at night with an easy mind, in spite of the big beer drinkings, and the "maliros" that disturbed our quiet.

Our favourite walk was to the Linje stream. Often the Msungu and I strolled there about five o'clock after I had given my final instructions in the kitchen.

The whole way was interesting. First of all, our goats came running down to meet us, and releasing ourselves at last from their attentions, we proceeded past the brick shed where the desolate jungle faced us. Then continuing along the twining red path, sometimes crossing over a moving stream of ants, we gained a slight ascent and passed between two large boulders where the baboons frequently came to get a view of our Station. A little way further brought us in sight of the deep ravines of the Linje ; the first, dry and hidden by trees ; the second, holding the dashing mountain torrent, where rustic steps had been cut down the bank for easy access to the water.

On the top of a flattish rock, by the side of the path, we would sit watching the sun setting behind the long wall of purple hills beyond the plain. How still everything was. Not the sound of a bird or a creature moving. Beneath us miles and miles of wooded valleys. But my eye always wandered to the calm faint moon right above the dark gorge of the Linje, as one seeks a "kent" face in a crowd, and I thought of the home folk, perhaps even then looking at it also.

One night we sat there as usual. The sun was giving its last look o'er the plain. The hills had darkened, sharply outlined against the flooding

gold. A rich warm glow was over everything. We rose to go home, clambered down the rock, and retraced our steps, dreading nothing.

Suddenly we heard voices from the bush, a little way below us. We were startled, and paused hesitatingly. Then we saw several dark heads appearing over the scrub.

"Ana wani?" (*Who are you?*) the Msungu called.

There was a shot fired, and a puff of smoke veiled the bush.

For one moment we stood as if struck, my heart throbbing painfully. Then the Msungu made a movement as if to go down to them, but I drew him back.

"Come on," I said breathlessly. "Look as if nothing had happened. Don't walk a bit quicker in case they think we are frightened."

For once the Msungu did as I told him. We walked leisurely, keeping our eyes fixed on the little Mission Station, so slowly growing larger before us. Several shots rattled behind us, echoed by the gigantic cliff of rock. We were frightened. Who is not, when the next moment he may be in eternity?

But nothing harmed us. As we reached our Station we ventured to look back, and saw eight natives following us down the path. We entered

the courtyard by the back, past the goat house where the herd boy was housing his flock for the night. There we met Kasawala.

"What were those men shooting out there?" asked the Msungu as coolly as possible.

"O, they are Kambona's relations who have been firing over his uncle's grave before going on a big elephant hunt," answered the boy, and we passed him.

"A scare about nothing," said the Msungu, giving a forced laugh. "I always told you that the natives are too cowardly ever to harm a white man. You know, one of the chiefs, when we first came here, was afraid to come near our Station for he had heard that we were going to make a great village, and to do this properly we must, he thought, first eat a big chief like himself."

I tried to smile, but though thus reassured, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand seemed to have settled above us. I felt cold. I trembled. The first fear had entered my heart.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MIDNIGHT FLIGHT

I WAS awakened one night by a sound as of the front door swinging with the wind. I sat up scarcely believing my ears. Every night it was locked before going to bed, and the key left inside. We had seen the girls, as usual, asleep on the floor under the table before retiring. Was it possible that they had opened the door again, or had some one else entered who was perhaps creeping softly towards our bed at this very moment?

I grasped my husband's arm. "Wake!" I whispered. "I heard the front door swing just now."

He was ready for action in a minute, and with lighted candle in my hand I followed him into the adjoining room. A cold wind blew on our faces, nearly putting out the light. The front door stood wide open. With hand surrounding the flame I shone it under the table. The girls were gone.

"Just what I thought," said the Msungu. "They'll be off to one of those abominable dances after all I have done. I thought we had got quite a hold of them." And he locked the door again.

He sat down on a chair beside the table with his head resting on his hand, and thought for a few minutes. Then he got up. "I must go and tell Robert Tause," he said. And he went out.

Robert Tause was a Mlanje native, a man who had been converted by my husband's predecessor —the Rev. Robert Cleland, who had died of malaria before the Station had been built. We believed his convert to be trustworthy, but his wife was a regular frequenter of immoral dances. They lived in a hut beside our kitchen.

This man was sent to look for the girls, and bring them back, if possible. Next morning the boys confirmed our suspicions by telling us that Masimani, the Doctor's cook, and Kasawala had also run away.

By and by Robert came back, but without any of the culprits, who must have heard of his approach and hidden themselves. But we did not despair. Namonde, the chief, was sent for. He came at once, plausible as ever, and apparently eager to help us, and a tiresome "magambo" was begun.

The next day he came again. I found him

sitting in the verandah when I got up. The Msungu took him over to a summer-house, just recently made in the garden, in which I could sit and survey the plain and the great rocky peak of the mountain. There they talked and talked, while I went about my work, feeling more tired than usual, not having my girls to help me, and missing their cheery, twittering songs.

But a little black child, perfectly naked save a string of red beads, and a wisp of cloth round her loins, found its way into our house and toddled after me everywhere I went with perfect confidence which comforted me in a way. How well I remember every little incident of that day for it was the beginning of the end.

In the afternoon, the baby following me, I went out to feed an infant monkey I had got the week before. There was something undoubtedly human about the little creature. The very first day it came, fresh from the jungle, I gave it a piece of loaf-sugar as it sat on the verandah. It took it in its hand, looked at it curiously, and tried to eat it. Finding it too hard it ran down the steps and dipped it into a pool of water, then returned and sucked it solemnly beside us.

At first we let it sleep in a box, which we placed in a tree that grew close to the verandah steps. But one night the boys came crying that they

had seen a leopard coming near the house. The Msungu at once ordered me to light the lantern, and help him to bring in the monkey.

I did so, and warily followed him outside. I stood at the foot of the tree, holding up the light while the Msungu, standing on a chair, tried to bring down the little animal.

Suddenly I heard a queer grunt behind me. The "chisui"! Lord help me! I ran at break neck speed into the house, lantern and all.

"Come back!" The Msungu's voice was peremptory.

I went back, still with my lantern, expecting every minute the leopard to be on me. What a time he took to bring down that monkey. I was sure that the "chisui" was hiding at the end of the verandah, preparing to spring. But the Msungu would not listen to reason. Really, sometimes, it is a dreadful thing to have a husband, or rather I should say, to have a monkey.

But to go back to that day, that day so vivid in my memory. The monkey fed, I prepared lunch. That over I lay down and diverted my mind by reading a story in *Tit Bits*. I remember it was *The Sign of Four*, by Conan Doyle. At four o'clock the Doctor came to join us in afternoon tea, and immediately after the Msungu and I went down to pay another visit to old Kuchilapa

and his wife, the black baby having long ere this returned to its mother.

The Msungu had had occasion to find fault with the old man. A certain piece of ground had been allotted to the Mission by the British Government. Kuchilapa, in ignorance, had cut down some of its trees and scrub. My husband, wishing to preserve the coverts where he got a few partridges, and probably from other reasons, ordered the old man to carry the wood, he had cut, up to our Station, telling him it belonged to us. Kuchilapa obeyed quite pleasantly which made us all the more sorry, so we determined to visit him to show our friendliness.

Though it was the rainy season the day was lovely. Refreshed by the showers the foliage showed a variety of colours resembling our Autumn tints. The grasses and reeds by our path, spotted by reds and browns, waved high above us. Little birds with long black tails and red collars flitted from branch to branch.

Coming in sight of Kuchilapa's hut we approached quietly lest they should take fright and run away ; but, notwithstanding our caution, not a soul was in sight when we arrived. But evidently the good wife was not far off for there stood the " lituli " (*a slightly hollowed log standing upright on which the maize is pounded*) with a

" chiselo " (*flattish basket*) placed on the top to keep the fowls from eating the pounded grain.

We sat down on a stone and waited. Soon we heard the jingling of anklets and through the tall bananas came Kuchilapa's wife carrying a large pumpkin with its flowers and leaves. She gave us a dignified salutation, laid down her armful on the ground, and went into her hut to return with an earthen-ware pot and a gourd filled with water.

Sitting down on a stone, she washed her hands by pouring on them some water. Then she cut up the pumpkin and shred its flowers and leaves, from which she took the hard fibre. With the exception of the latter she put the whole into the pot. These were to make the " mboga " (*savoury*) for their porridge.

While she worked the Msungu talked pleasantly about the wood her husband had cut. She said that he would never be so impertinent again. Before we left she gave us a basket filled with ripe juicy " msukas."

When we got home the sun was setting. I went to see about dinner, while the Msungu brought in the monkey in case of the leopards. The Doctor still dined with us and we three sat down as usual, feeling restful after our day's labours. During the meal the monkey climbed on the Doctor's back.

He hastily threw it down. Then coffee was brought in—delicious fragrant coffee, newly roasted. We were as happy as people can possibly be in a malarious country. We were joking and laughing while our boys waited behind us, themselves enjoying the bright light and the novel comfort, when suddenly a knock was heard at the door and four natives, led by Robert Tause, entered.

The latter delivered a message in Yao, talking excitedly while gesticulating with his hands. I did not understand what he said, nor did I pay much attention, thinking it concerned our boys' and girls' "magambo." But all at once I was struck by the words—"ngondo" (*war*), soldier, and Chiromo, an African Lakes Company trading station on the Shire river.

I saw my husband's face turn pale, and the Doctor, though only partly comprehending, for he had given all his attention to the Manganja language, looked disturbed.

When the men were dismissed, with the exception of Robert, who waited to consult with us, my husband, after a few minutes' silence, told us that the message was from Namonde, to warn us that Matapwira, a very powerful chief, on the other side of the mountain, had asked another chief to help him to kill all the white people on

Mlanje. Word had come to the village that the attack would be made that night, or before dawn next morning. In proof of this the women in Mkanda's district were already flying to the hills.

To kill all the white men! That could only mean ourselves and two or three planters scattered at various distances, and Mr. B—— the Government Agent.

Mechanically I poured out the coffee, which we hastily drank. Then the table was cleared and the men called in again to discuss the situation. Robert suggested that they should build a "masakasa" (*grass house*) for the Donna in some hidden part of the mountain; but we did not second that motion. Instead, the Msungu at once sent for men to carry me in my machilla if we should have to depart suddenly; also spies were chosen to report when the enemy should cross the Lekabula river. Then two of our boys were dispatched, one to the Irish planter, "Madziku-samba," and the other to Mr. B—— with letters telling them what we had heard.

The boys gone, we gathered all the guns, revolvers and ammunition we had, and placed them on the table. Then the Doctor tried to teach me how to pull the trigger of a Martini Henry. How I regretted not having gone down to the brick shed, as he had suggested, and

practised shooting. If I had had any idea of the difficulty I daresay I would have done it. Now it was too late I could not help them.

By and by the machilla men came, amongst them old Kuchilapa, hearty as usual, and eagerly requesting "sôni" (*tobacco*) which was given him. After sitting some time in the verandah they came to the door crouching up their shoulders. "Mbepo" (*cold*) they said.

The Msungu told them that a good man called Kuchilapa had very kindly cut down some firewood for us. They would find it outside the kitchen if they wanted warmth. The joke pleased them and they went good-humouredly to the back courtyard where they lit a fire. It shone on our back windows, and peering out we could see their dark faces lit up by the blazing wood.

And we talked and planned while listening to the crackling logs, and the drawling sound of the men's voices outside. They seemed quite merry and unconcerned while we were anxiously wondering what we should do. Even our little monkey, as if in sympathy with us, went under the cupboard and moaned piteously.

After what seemed a long time a letter came from the Irish planter telling us that all his boys had run away, and that he had heard nothing of the proposed attack.

This looked bad. Why had his boys run away ? Had not Mkanda's women run to the hills ? The Msungu said it was folly to sit here longer when a woman had to be protected. The Doctor rather unwillingly assented. We gathered a few necessaries together. We could not carry much. It seems ridiculous to me now that I packed only a small jar of Bovril and a bottle of sal volatile. Not a thought had I for money, clothes or jewellery.

But still we lingered, unwilling to leave our home. Then my husband put in my hand a loaded revolver. "If the worst comes to the worst," he said, "you will put the bullet in your own head."

Had it all come to this ? All my happy visions of the future. My thoughts went back to my cottage home—the little plantation at the back where we played as children ; the glen with its hazel bushes, the burn where we waded and fished for trout ; and the cool, cool spring where we got our water. I seemed to see my dead mother's face looking at me with eyes of encouragement, and I felt calmer knowing that nothing worse could happen me than being forced to join her.

Then we had prayer together and waited an hour or two longer. But at midnight my husband thought it better for my sake to depart. We would make our way by degrees to Chiromo, some

twenty miles distant. The Doctor yielded, seeing no other alternative. The machilla men were called. They shrugged their shoulders and refused to carry me, but Kuchilapa and one or two men offered to accompany us.

I threw a Shetland shawl round my shoulders. The Msungu strapped the revolver to my waist, and put the lighted lantern in my hand. Then we three went out. In front of us the night loomed dark and formless. Silently we went down the verandah steps, the Doctor casting a wistful look towards his house. It was then that his reluctance to leave the Station became manifest. Just as we went through the little gate in the fence he looked back and said: "I am sorry to leave that sideboard."

So we started, walking single file through the jungle. I went in front, carrying the lantern, the Msungu and the Doctor following with the natives bringing up the rear. The tall rank grass walled each side of our path, hiding we knew not what. We passed Kuchilapa's hut, then the Banana village, and nothing obstructed our way till we came to the Linje stream. There I had to be carried across on Kuchilapa's back; so had the Doctor and the Msungu in their turn.

Alighting on the other side I said "Jambone," which means "good," and is equivalent to

"thank you," and pegged on my way. But all at once my feet began to sink in marshy ground. I screamed involuntarily, but I was soon on firm land again and ashamed of my timidity.

I know not how far we had gone when a blaze of flame was waved in front of me. I stood paralysed, forgetting entirely my loaded revolver. Then I saw two dark figures appear from the high grass at the edge of the path. The Msungu called out to them, and we discovered that they were our own boys, flourishing a torch of burning grass. They had been sent ahead to ask the Irish planter to come down to speak to us.

It appeared that we had reached the foot of his plantation. There was a "masakasa" (*a rough shed*) a short distance from our path. We went into it, and sitting on the ground awaited his coming. We spoke little. Dimly we saw each others' faces. Outside the frogs croaked incessantly in the marshes. We could hear the voices of the men whispering outside. Then I noticed a large locust coming into the shed. It walked deliberately forward, never heeding us, as if intent on something. My eyes followed it as if it were essential that I should watch it.

After what seemed a long time Madzi-ku-samba arrived. How tall and handsome he looked standing there in the moonlight. How strong and

protective. He insisted that we should come up to his house and rest that night. He would send out spies to warn us of the approach of the enemy. We accepted his hospitality. I was so tired that my only desire was to rest in sleep.

We followed him along the path, and over a plank across a stream, then up the mountain, a steep climb, to his house—a long white-washed erection with a broad verandah. He let me have his only bed. It was simply a raised board with a few rugs on the top. The room had no furnishings save a small deal table on which was an empty tobacco tin. But I was thankful for as good, and lay down at once. A cup of tea, which seemed the best I had ever tasted, was brought in to me by the Msungu, who was to sleep on the floor beside my bed.

Next morning at early dawn, after a dreamless sleep, my husband awoke me with the news that our chief, Namonde, had come all the way to inform us that it had been a false alarm, caused by some women in Mkanda's village running to the hills, owing to a quarrel among themselves. But was it a false alarm? What happened afterwards makes us doubt it. But we believed him then, and blessed him for his goodwill.

We did not go home that day. Madzi-ku-samba persuaded us to spend another night with him;

but the Doctor returned shortly after breakfast to our Station, and to his beloved sideboard.

That forenoon, being provided with a pencil and a piece of paper, I made a sketch of the grand view of the valley from the verandah, making notes of the light and shade, as the scene was too vast to take in at one sitting, even if I had had the proper materials. To the right rose two gigantic trees, bare and blighted by the storms. Near their feet was a wooded foreground of every shade and colour, sloping to the plain. In the middle distance was the valley flooded with light, and rising from it one of those queer conical peaks peculiar to the neighbourhood. Behind, soft undulating hills melted into the background. But words cannot describe it, nor artist's brush.

In the afternoon Mr. B——, the Government Agent, called, expecting to hear some account of us, and we spent a happy hour or two making light of our past fears.

CHAPTER XIV

A MIGHTY BREWING

NEXT morning after breakfast the Msungu and I set out for our own Station. We had no fear, believing implicitly Namonde's reassuring message. I remember nothing of that walk until we came to the Linje stream. There, having crossed it at a more shallow part than we had seen the night before, my husband suddenly complained of faintness. I had been so long kept up by his strength and protection that now being unexpectedly deprived of it, my heart grew sick.

The sun had been glaring down on us all morning. Now the trees by the water proved a shelter. He sat down under one of its hollowed banks unable to go further, and, fearing that it was a touch of fever or sun-stroke, I hurried on alone in order to send a machilla to bring him up. If I had no fear for the terrors of the jungle it was not from bravery, but through

ignorance. My revolver was buckled to my waist as it had been the night before, for if I had not the presence of mind to use it, it might prove a deterrent to any wicked person.

As I came within sight of our Station the boys, headed by Mlenga, my head cook, guessing by some wonderful instinct my approach, came running to meet me.

Mlenga, his round face bursting with smiles, with graphic gesticulations and a gush of Yao, informed me that he had made a steamed custard in our honour, a thing he had never attempted before, as it was very difficult explaining to them the exact time a food had to be cooked. As I feared, the custard was hard like leather, but I acted the part of enjoying it immensely.

Meanwhile a machilla had been sent for the Msungu and soon he arrived feeling much better for the little rest. But I did not feel so brave as I did in the morning. In spite of the Doctor's cheerful talk there was a strange melancholy about the place. For one thing my little monkey lay moaning in a corner of the dining room, and notwithstanding all our attention it died the following day. We buried it on the slope of Mount Mlanje, and I mourned as if it had been a child.

For several nights after our return I slept with

most of my clothes on. On the third night I was awakened by hearing the sound of guns. This was nothing so very unusual, it might be a maliro, or a beer drinking, but my strained nerves kept me awake listening anxiously. Suddenly an ominous tap, tap, came to the window and Mlenga's voice was heard saying in a solemn tone: "Msungu, do you hear the guns?"

In a moment we were up, I, shivering with cold, or was it terror? We dressed ourselves in the fitful light of a candle for it was barely four o'clock and quite dark. My fingers felt powerless as I fastened my dress. Surely if the boys were alarmed there was good cause.

Going into the verandah we met the Doctor, who had been aroused also, growling at being so soon disturbed, or at the probability of again leaving his sideboard. For a time we talked and argued till dawn broke and crept like a grey ghost around the house. The ground reddened, and the acacia trees in front held out dark branches against the vast greyness beyond.

The boys were chattering with awed voices. They crowded near us. It was a comfort to know that they had warned us. Still the Doctor was of opinion that it was only another hoax. Spies were sent out who soon returned to tell us that a big beer drinking was going on at a neighbouring

village, hence the firing of guns which had alarmed us. The mists lifted. The great rocky peak, like a pyramid, appeared before us. The sun gleamed yellow through the feathery vapour.

For some time great beer drinkings were held in the district. Consequently there were many quarrels, and the natives always came to us to have their disputes settled. Once the Msungu had to get up in the middle of the night to assist the Doctor to plaster the heads of two men. Another time word came that there had been a fierce dispute in a village some distance off, and that two women had been shot.

Providing himself with machillas and a number of carriers the Doctor at once started for the place, and before evening returned with his patients—an old woman and a young one. They were put in one of his rooms and the next day he began to extract the bullets ; but it was a difficult operation, the charge having been composed of sand and beads.

The Msungu generally assisted him, but one day the Doctor insisted on my presence, and I, being unaccustomed to the sight of blood, went reluctantly.

The young woman lay on a bench, her head propped up by a pillow and the back of a chair, with her leg bared for the operation. She looked

round as I entered, and was so much interested in my appearance (probably I was the first white woman she had ever seen) that she did not seem to feel the pain of the Doctor's probing. She never once winced, which is more than I can say of myself for, when the blood began to trickle, I opportunely remembered that I had a sago pudding on the fire, and ran away to make sure it was not burning.

Some male relations of the women looked after them a little, more perhaps from curiosity to see what was being done than from any regard to their friends. Yet why be their judge? Still a tremendous callousness exists among these natives regarding pain and death when they do not affect themselves. One day the Doctor visited the Banana village and found a woman who was dreadfully burnt lying on the ground outside her hut, quite unprotected from the scorching sun. I think it was the first time I had seen the Doctor angry. After scolding the relatives who had cast the woman out of the hut, he returned at once to our house and expatiated on their barbarity while I, by his directions, rolled up a mat and gathered a few necessary things for the poor creature's comfort. These last acts perhaps soothed her, but she died in a day or two.

At the same time there are exceptions, though

alas! very few. One day a number of natives arrived at our Station carrying on a litter a very old woman, the mother of a chief, to the Doctor to be cured. Her back was one mass of suppurating sores painful to see. Every attention was given her by her friends, and the Doctor kept her for a considerable time, treating her to the best of his skill. The disease, however, proved obstinate and the friends getting tired, more probably hopeless, carried her back to her people with great tenderness. What a poor little bundle she looked as I watched her go past.

It was the only time I ever saw the natives carrying, without compulsion, one of their own race. When we remember that the habit of these heathen is to destroy the deformed, the aged, and the unwanted in the village, like in the case of poor old Che Chagula, this instance of feeling is the more remarkable.

Our two women patients, however, got quite better, and were able to walk back to their village ere many days had passed. I grew so accustomed to the sound of guns, with the frequent explanation that it was due to a beer drinking, that I ceased to be anxious, knowing nothing of the fact that a great brew is generally made before fighting some enemy. Unfortunately I was to learn that to my bitter cost ere very long.

CHAPTER XV

THE PUNISHMENT

BWANALI had just lowered the flag and sounded the bugle when Robert Tause came up the steps of the verandah with Ajaula ; the two boys had been brought back a few hours earlier.

There was a painful scene in the dining room, where the little culprit received her punishment —two or three strokes from the chikoti, which were supposed to teach her that the way of transgressors is hard.

I waited alone in the verandah with a sore heart, gazing at the golden-edged clouds, tumbled together above the long line of hills opposite. The sun was under a cloud and nearly set, but it shed down two broad rays right between the purple peaks.

I knew Mele also wanted to come back, but fear prevented her. She would doubtless return soon, then the old life would begin again with its little trilling songs to lighten the work.

But a few days passed and there was no sign of Mele. At last word came that Robert would bring her back that evening.

The Msungu was uneasy and irritable. I knew what he was thinking. At last he said : " I think I'll not punish Mele. It's horrible to strike a girl."

" But you punished Ajaula," I said, still harping on discipline. " Why should you make any difference ? "

" Mele is really a woman," said the Msungu ; " it will not be necessary in her case. She will understand, and like us the better for being kind."

" They are all children," I said harshly. " It will never do to make any difference. How would Ajaula feel when Mele told her ? Ajaula will be hurt and angry, and Mele will be proud and intolerant, thinking she stands higher in your favour."

" If they had only come back together," lamented the Msungu, " we might have let them both off. But if you think I shouldn't make any difference I won't, though it's detestable."

" It is just a case of discipline," I said. " They don't feel so intensely as we do, therefore the lesson must be keener. You cannot appeal to a higher nature where it is not yet born."

" I suppose you are right," said the Msungu

sadly ; " but I wish I had nothing to do with it."

No more was said on the subject. The day passed, evening came, and still no sign of Mele. The drums were beating continuously with a dull thud, thud, in a little village higher up the mountain. In the stillness of the night wails and screams were heard at intervals. The weird sounds got on my nerves. I was glad when the time came for our native service, when Ajaula knelt as usual by my side with her elbows resting on the table. She looked at me, and I saw that she was trying to draw my attention to something. I followed her eyes and saw a large grass tick crawling over the table. The Doctor noticed it also, and taking out his knife ground its handle on the creature. It lay still, dead for certain. But no—to my surprise it walked again as hale as ever, till the Doctor cut it in four with the blade of his knife.

And all the time Mele lived in my thoughts—the tick was associated with her, the door also by which she would enter, and the Msungu gravely reading the Bible lesson.

Oh, if Mele were only here and everything as before.

Prayers over I went to bed. I had just lain down when I heard a stir outside, then the front door open, and Robert speaking.

"Oh, Mele, Mele," I heard my husband say.

Then the front door shut and I knew that Robert had gone. My heart began to beat faster. What if the Msungu had been right and I wrong? Could I run in yet and prevent the punishment?

I half rose from my bed. "Ajaula was as blythe as a bird the very next day." "Remember how proudly Mele tosses her head." "The besetting sin of the native is pride." These thoughts flashed upon me.

I fell back on my pillow. I heard the reassuring voice of the Msungu in firm gentle tones through the wall. "Perhaps he will not do it," I thought. "Never mind her pride. After all, what wrong has she done? It was only the call of the Wild —the call of Nature she had answered. Why punish her?"

Then I heard—one, two, three strokes as from the chikoti in the next room. I felt each blow and my face crimsoned—then a fourth stroke, and I sank back panting on the pillow.

Not a sound from Mele, not a cry. There was a silence for a few minutes. Then I heard the Msungu speaking in soft persuasive tones. Was he praying to the Almighty Father to help her to resist temptation? I wondered.

The front door opened and shut, and I knew that the Msungu had passed out to the tranquility

of the night; then the fearful thought came to me—"A woman is never degraded by a man striking her, but *he is*." Yet I alone was the transgressor in this case.

Next day, I saw no difference in my girls. They chatted and laughed, and went about their tasks as willingly as ever. I gave them sweets, and promised them "quenda jenda" (*a walk*) in the afternoon, when the work was over.

After lunch some clothes had to be ironed. The irons were brought in from the kitchen. Ajaula took hers, spat on it, rubbed it on a paper and began her work in a business-like manner.

I looked at Mele. She was standing idle, watching her companion.

"Mele," I said, "Aseti" (*iron*).

She held her right hand out and showed me its palm. "See," she said quite brightly, "I can't iron to-day."

I looked at her hand. I saw nothing wrong; but the sorrow of the past night had come back to me.

CHAPTER XVI

A WOMAN'S SYMPATHY

THE weather grew cooler, almost every day, generally in the afternoon there was a thunderstorm. I dreaded them at first, but very soon all fear left me. In fact I rather welcomed them. They cleared the air, and put away my depression. There were so many greater dangers that I preferred like King David to "fall into the hands of the living God."

I might have been perfectly contented if a longing had not come into my heart to see a white woman. For over six months, an age it seemed, I had not seen one of my own kind. How nice, I thought, it would be to see a person dressed in pretty clothes with the little ornaments peculiar to the feminine sex. I even fancied that it would be a pleasure to count the buttons down the front of her bodice, as the fashion then was.

When at last word came that a newly married

couple, a missionary and his wife, were coming to spend a few days with us I was quite excited.

What a preparation I made. What pies and cakes I baked with the help of Mlenga and Kasaswichi. What a cleaning the little drawing room got, which was to be their bedroom by night, so easily I could remove the rugs and skins from the single bed that formed the couch.

But when the Msungu rushed in to tell me that our visitors were actually coming up the mountain I fairly trembled. I had to go into my bedroom and calm myself with sal volatile, foolish thing that I was. Curbing my agitation I went out to meet them, and when I saw the bonnie, fresh face of the young wife all nervousness left me.

Everything seemed conducive to a perfect friendship. We were nearly the same age, neither of us was long married, we were both in a strange land far from home, and our social positions were the same.

But I was disappointed. I thought I would pour out my pent-up feminine thoughts, and she did not understand me. When I said how I had longed to see a white woman, and how I should like one at our Station, she remarked that she would be perfectly happy anywhere alone with her husband. And that gentleman entirely agreed with her.

I felt rebuked. Was there something a-wanting in my nature? Had I somehow failed to be a good wife?

The Doctor and the Msungu took my part, and they almost had words with her husband, and I had much trouble in keeping peace. But the lady was too buxom and healthy ever to be disturbed. Fortunately it was only at meal-times that we had much chance for conversation.

Yet when I considered that this lady had never been in my position, but had always been supported by the companionship of other women, older and more experienced, a little clique in fact, some of them even related, and that the Mission Station in which she lived had every home comfort, not to mention luxury, I could better understand her.

As we had received information that the mail might arrive any day, we were busy writing letters all that first evening, and next day I had not much conversation with her as my time was greatly taken up with cooking preparations, and in the little leisure I had my guest was occupied with a novel in the drawing room. But I did not blame her. She could not know the weary longing that was in my heart.

As a picnic had been planned up the mountain I rose early next day, and baked and cooked a

variety of things for our lunch outdoors. By the time we were ready to start I was quite fatigued, and although we took men and a machilla with us we all walked. I did not like to show weakness, my lady guest was so strong and robust. I tried hard to keep up with the others.

The day was perfect. The scenery magnificent; but the way was all up hill, and ere I had gone very far a shivering and sickness came over me. My head ached intolerably. My legs felt like weights of lead.

I hid my trouble as long as I could, but when at long and last we sat down to lunch in the shade of some huge cedars I fairly collapsed. Had our Doctor been with us it might have been different; as it was, nobody, unless the Msungu, showed the least concern, and even he tried to make light of it. It was only an ordinary case of fever, the most common thing in the African world; yet I got the machilla on the way home, for which I was thankful.

I remember nothing more except that as soon as we got home I crept to bed and left my guests to entertain themselves. I could hear them laughing and chatting through the thin wall of my room while I buried my burning, throbbing head in the pillow.

I did not see my visitors again. About five

next morning they left for their own Station. That day my temperature rose to 104°. I was quite conscious. After all the usual remedies had been tried without success, the Doctor asked me if I would take Warburg's tincture, a medicine he had not as yet tested on his patients. If I took it, he said, I must refrain from drinking water, or any liquid, for two hours.

So the draught was given, and I lay watching the little carriage clock on the chest of drawers, at intervals tossing and turning with that burning, intolerable thirst killing every other desire in my nature. Ever before me was the cool, cool spring near my cottage home. What bucketfuls I drank in imagination, but I only grew thirstier. And my wearied eyes were straining on the clock. How slowly its hands moved. Would the time never pass? But I bore it; and just as the two hours were ending the sweat broke out all over me. My life was saved.

What a relief it was. I was lifted into another bed for coolness. It was low and near the ground. Two tin travelling boxes, one on the top of the other, acted as a table beside me. On it lay a candle, a water-bottle, a match-box, and the powder which I was to take at a certain time through the night. But a whole family of rats came out to hold a nocturnal revel and danced

over me for hours. They ate the candle, knocked over the water-bottle, which flooded the powder and the matches, making it impossible for me to strike a light or take my medicine. But I did not mind them. I was too happy from the relief I had experienced. At dawn my merry visitors left me, when I discovered a baby rat drowned in a basin of water beside my bed.

CHAPTER XVII

SUNDAY, AND A SNAKE

HOWEVER distressing these fevers of mine may seem on narrating, to me they are now glossed over, and I only think of them as occasions for rest and being attended to instead of attending. I was often so tired. The responsibility seemed so great, the climate was so trying, and just at the beginning of the rainy season another girl—Achilandana—was added to my charge.

How can I describe her ? To say that she was blacker than our other girls and that she was not particularly good-looking, though exactly true, would give an entirely wrong impression. From the very first she inspired confidence. There was a certain firmness and kindness in her manner. Living with her and seeing her each day one forgot all other disadvantages and felt only her brightness, willingness and good-nature.

Her child life, in Namonde, the chief's, village,

had been more trying than interesting. She loved the flowers and the little grey moles which she dug up to play with, and if the older people had but let her alone she might have been perfectly happy. But she was betrothed to an elderly man with a black beard, named Mtande, and her parents had decreed that she must have a waistband, like all other well-bred girls, so that she would be quite presentable when the time came to give her in marriage. She had therefore to go every other day to an old woman, who took great pains in tattooing an elaborate pattern round her body.

Achilandana did not like it. She would much rather have been left unadorned like the common slave girls. And there was still another ordeal in prospect: she was to be initiated into the mysteries of the Unyago.

When she heard that some missionaries had come to the mountain, she never dreamed that their coming would affect her until she saw several of her companions taken to live at the white man's house. Soon she heard what wonderful things they were learning and seeing. Every Sunday afternoon the girls from the Mission would come home with such stories, a favourite one being about a man called Noah who made a large wooden house that could float on the water, so big that it could hold one of every living thing;

and when a great Spirit sent a flood to drown every body and creature in the world, this man got them all into his great boat and saved them. This powerful Spirit was a friend of the white man and taught him all kinds of magic, and most wonderful of all—he actually wanted to teach the black man also.

No wonder that Achilandana was fired with a desire to go to the Mission. She ceased to take an interest in the village pastimes, and winced every time the old woman pricked that lovely pattern on her waist. Her people had no patience with her, and were not sorry when the Msungu came and arranged that she should come to the Mission.

I have thus expatiated on Achilandana, for she was my little companion and comfort in the time of trial, which came—as already had been threatened.

Did I give the impression that these times of fever were my only opportunities for rest? If so I must hasten to add that one day in the week was to me as an oasis in the desert. Sunday it was. Not from any religious principle, or that, as some might say, I had sweet communion with the Eternal, though these I had, but simply because it was a day when my wearied body and mind left struggling alone.

I think I see my three girls as they sallied into my bedroom on a Sabbath morning. Through my room into the little store they went, where they kept their clothes in one of my tin boxes. With what a look of importance they came out, transformed into neat little maids with short print skirts and blouses, their red cotton sashes tied in neat bows behind. So proud were they of these sashes that one day when a traveller arrived with a camera, a rare opportunity for me to be photographed with my girls, they tied them conspicuously in front, instead of behind. Unfortunately I took a sudden fever in the afternoon and the photo was never made.

My girls waited for me at the door, and we walked down the road to church, past the Doctor's house, and entered the low thatched building of wattle and daub. It had no windows. The open door admitted sufficient light. A number of natives, already assembled, were squatted on the ground. Besides babies on backs, little toddling children, naked as they came into the world, were there also, and when the hymns were sung they got up and danced; but then, David himself praised God in the dance.

Across the lapse of time the sweet strains come back to me, and I hear their soft childish voices in the hymn—"Jesus loves me"—that appeals

to black and white. But they are the Yao words I hear :—

"Yesu akunonyela,
Chindu achi ngumanya ;
Wanono wa m'mangwakwe
Akulimba kwangune."

The sermon was most simple. They seemed to listen attentively. Namonde's chief wife in particular, a sad-eyed woman, with a yearning look on her face, never took her eyes off the preacher.

The service over we went home. Stepping up the verandah this particular Sunday we suddenly stopped. A black snake, about a yard long, was in the act of entering our dining room. The boys drew back in fear, but the Msungu seized a stick, and striking it smartly on the head, killed it. The boys reluctantly, with the help of two sticks, threw it into the bush. They said it was a very deadly kind which had a head at each end.

I thought no more of it at the time, but hurried round to the kitchen to see about lunch. Returning to the house with a plate of steaming pancakes I met the Doctor, who shook his head with pretended disapproval.

"O Donna, Donna, I am surprised at you," he said, "breaking the Sabbath this way."

After lunch the girls and all the boys, except one or two who waited to help with dinner, were

allowed home. The Doctor went to preach in some village, and the Msungu and I were left alone. How quiet and deserted the Station felt; but I liked it—no hurrying from my rest in the afternoon to give the girls their lessons, only the welcome peace of the Sunday when the great hills seemed like everlasting arms stretched protectingly around us.

An idea of how the mountains affected me can be gathered from my diary under the date of January 29th. I remember it was written in the morning after a fearfully windy night when we thought our house would be swept down the hill. Was it by chance or guidance that I opened the Bible at these words which I wrote in my diary?

> "For lo, He that formed the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth. The Lord, the God of Hosts is His name."

This place, indeed, seemed the very home of the wind.

That Sunday afternoon there was a great rainfall, and the Lekabula at the foot of the mountain came down in flood. Consequently the boys did not return that night from the village, but the girls, wonderful to relate, appeared all drenched with water, having swum across the river.

Our Sunday dinner at six o'clock was the chief

event in the week. The Doctor always dined with us that day, and I generally tried to have something out of the usual. In spite of the rough surroundings the table looked very well with its white cloth, ironed smooth by the girls. A red geranium was stuck in each serviette. The glasses shone. The finest coffee, newly roasted and ground, ended the meal.

Then what a feast the boys would have at the end of the verandah with all that was left over. As a rule they were allowed to cook for us what vegetables they pleased. Sometimes there was a marvellous choice. Probably there would be a dish of mashed yams, an enormous root, in its raw state very sticky and juicy; and chipere, a very fine bean; also sweet potatoes and rice. The more they cooked the greater the chance of them being well fed.

But to return to that Sunday when we saw the snake. I remembered about it just as we were going to bed. Having heard that a snake never comes into a house alone, but brings a mate with it, we made a very careful search of the bedroom before lying down. Nothing disturbed us that night; but the night after I was awakened by hearing a splashing noise in the dining room. Right through the wall, where the sound came from, stood a filter and two pails of water.

I sat up, listening anxiously. Splash, splash. Something undoubtedly was struggling in the water—the snake for certain.

I awoke my husband. Ever on the alert he became conscious at once. We got up, lit a candle, hastily threw on our dressing gowns, and went into the dining room. The girls lay as usual asleep under the table, like bales of red blankets. We awoke them so that they might defend themselves from the snake. They were highly excited on hearing our story, and we all tip-toed forward, the Msungu leading the way with a stout stick in his hand, ready to strike.

I shone the candle over the pail. The splashing continued vigorously. Truly it had been no nightmare this time. Fearfully we peeped in. Then we all jumped back with one accord, the girls screaming in terror: "Lijoka" (*snake*).

We had seen a large black curved thing under the water. The snake must have fallen from the roof. Summoning up all our courage we ventured to look again, and discovered that the large black curved thing was only the reflection or shadow of the pail's handle which happened to be in an erect position.

But what of the splashing? A frightened mouse was swimming about in the water.

CHAPTER XVIII

A WANDERING MINSTREL

THESE were the days of the great rains. Sometimes we were awakened through the night by water coming down on our heads. We would rise and shift the bed to a drier position, if possible, then go to sleep again. Various efforts were made at thatching as soon as we could procure a man for the work. Matwika it was who went on the roof. He had a cheerful way of making strange noises with his mouth. We could have sworn that a lion or some other wild beast was wandering over the thatch. It seemed to help him with his work.

Yet the rain came through in spite of Matwika's efforts and groanings. The streams were flooded and the Linje took its giant leap over the great cliff with a deafening roar, and as if to keep it company, myriads of smaller streams ran down, and gushed through the rock at unexpected places, making the vast purple wall streaked with

white. Then was heard "the voice of many waters."

And the wind swept round the mountain with a fearsome sound. Mists shrouded the rocks in the mornings and through the day there would be gales and bursts of sunshine alternately. We wore our warmest clothing, for we felt the cold keenly with the malaria in our blood, and coming as it did so quickly after the heat. Yet the temperature was never lower than 75° by day, and 65° at night.

The natives undoubtedly feel the cold also, though not to the same extent as we do. Yet they are the most inconsistent people imaginable. One cold morning, getting up before dawn, wrapped in my travelling cloak, I met Luwiya, one of the dish-washers, coming into the dining room, stark naked save for a little string of loin cloth. Yet his shoulders were raised and his arms pressed tightly round his breast for warmth.

"Ngua ali kwapi, Luwiya?" (*Where is your cloth?*) I asked.

"Asalasye" (*It is reserved*) he replied pleasantly, perhaps expecting that I would applaud his extreme economy.

Another day, a Saturday it was, the girls went to the Linje as usual to wash their Sunday clothes. But why they took it into their heads to wash the

garments they had on is a problem. They came back, dripping and shivering in their wet clothes. I made them remove their soaking garments, and wrapped Mele and Ajaula in their red blankets while their wet things were drying. To Achilandana I gave a pink flannel night-dress I had discarded, which she wore with her red sash. She was so delighted that she asked if she might wear it next day to church.

At this season we had often to light a fire. The mats were rolled up, and the logs kindled on the brick floor. True, the smoke nipped our eyes, but much escaped through the opening under the eaves. But we did not suffer alone. Our goats had kids, and we found two of the little creatures half dead with cold. We carried them into the house and tethered them in the drawing room where we had a fire made on the floor ; but we foolishly did not bring in their mothers. Of course we found them both dead in the morning.

Sometimes the girls would lie close to the smouldering wood in the dining room, instead of under the table, when they went to bed. Growing anxious one night after we retired, lest they should be burnt, we returned to the room, where we found them so close to the fire that one of Mele's tiny feet was pressed against a burning log.

In this way many natives get burnt. Their huts generally consist of two small apartments, the inner one for sleeping, and the door so low that one has to stoop to enter. In cold weather a fire is lit in the outer room. It is left smouldering all night, and the wonder is that there are so few accidents.

But though the storms raged outside we had peace among ourselves. The natives had been very quiet for some time, no beer drinking, nothing to disturb us. We heard of fighting on the Upper River. The gun-boats were up at Lake Nyassa, but it did not affect us. Besides, a new military station had been started at the far end of the mountain to stop the slave trade on the Arab route between Lake Nyassa and the coast. I had not been aware of it, so one morning I got quite a surprise. Looking out of my window, while I was dressing, I saw a number of tall powerful-looking men, wearing large white turbans of twisted calico, and all fully armed, coming round the corner of our little church. I took them for Europeans as they were so much lighter than our natives. But they were the famous Indian Sikhs on their way to the Fort.

Indeed the natives seemed more friendly than usual. Even Chipoka (*Mr. Great Pride*) a big chief of the Manganja tribe, came to see us, dressed

in a soldier's old red coat, with the usual cloth wound round his limbs. He brought us a hamper filled with oranges, large green ones, very juicy, with a delicious flavour the yellowed fruit never has. Perhaps I should not have mentioned it for we heard that the British Consul—Sir Harry Johnson—about this time ordered all the fruit on the mountain to be sent to the Consulate ; but surely he would not have grudged us a little. We had sore need of fruit as we had hardly ever a green vegetable. I used to cut up for my soup, in lieu of them, the yellow pods of the chili, and gather thyme from the garden. Lemons we generally had, brought from a tree growing wild by the Lekabula river. There were none as far as we knew on the mountain ; but I planted a row of seeds, which may now be bearing fruit for the comfort of the Mission.

Namonde also still kept friendly with us, and visited us oftener than we desired, at least than I did. In fancy I see myself, one afternoon, in the long strip of garden in front of the house. I am plucking tomatoes from the first crop since my arrival, red luscious fruit about the size of large gooseberries, and eating them greedily. Behind them gigantic blooms of "Love-lies-bleeding" crimson the background. Overhead an acacia tree spreads out its glossy green layers

of foliage. Red, blue and green lizards dart like lightning over the great boulders at the end of the garden. My attention is diverted by a walking-stick insect, striding awkwardly over the rough earth. It is a little time of respite from my work when I try to relax my worried brow and throw off the malarious depression which like some fiend tries to hold me. It is a blink of sunshine between the storms in more senses than one.

The tomatoes have refreshed me; the beauty around has lifted me up. The feeling that my work is done for the day perhaps is the chief benefactor.

But like the serpent that came into Eden, Namonde, the chief, appears coming round the corner of the fence. He walks erectly with a proud air to-day. For why? He is wearing his white jacket just recently washed, and he is sure that the dark blue drapery round his limbs reveals his fine proportions, while his brown silk parasol is held up elegantly over one shoulder.

"He will pass," I say to myself. "He will not notice a mean creature like me."

But no, he pauses at the little gate. There is a traitorous smile on his face. I fain would shrink behind the glorious mass of "Love-lies-bleeding," but it is too late. He has seen me,

and he is in an unusually affable mood. I believe for the moment he thinks he is white.

I come forward as the bird comes to the hawk. He condescends to shake hands, and wish me "Moni." But our conversation is necessarily limited for I can only speak of household matters, and these will hardly suit a chief.

But our important visitors were not only chiefs and white men. A very remarkable native, a wandering minstrel, came to our Station one day. He wore a circlet of feathers, standing erect, round his head ; a scarf wound round his well developed chest ; and, dangling from his waist, a multitude of skins and tails of beasts, kept tight at the top by a band of red cotton. Near his ankles hung a number of small brown gourds, filled with tiny pebbles. He carried a native banjo.

His approach was heralded by our boys and girls. They rushed to us in great excitement to tell us of his coming. We ran out to the verandah, just in time to see his feathered head appearing over the brow of the hill at the end of the garden. Close behind him followed a little old woman, wearing a very scanty cloth, leading a band of village children whom he had taught to sing his choruses and responses.

The minstrel smiled and nodded as he took his position before us, in front of the house, and the

children all squatted in a long line behind him.

Strum, strum ! A wild melody came forth from the banjo. He began to dance, slowly and thoughtfully. The little old woman paced after him, imitating his movements, while she cast grimacing glances towards the children, who responded at intervals to the music and clapped their hands.

He then drawled a sort of chant. The old woman mumbled slowly, looking behind her slyly while she footed the dance. The children responded solemnly, then rose and followed the old woman in a long line, imitating her motions. Crescendo went the music. Faster they danced. The skins round the minstrel's waist rose up and floated around him. The gourds rattled. The old woman tucked up her scanty skirt and clapped her hands with the children.

Wilder grew the dance. His body writhed like a serpent. The skins spread out and whirled like a cloud in the air. The little old woman contorted herself stiffly, looking over her shoulder mockingly at the children, who raised their voices in the chant, and clapped tremendously.

The dance ended. The minstrel came over to us, wreathed in smiles, holding out his hand. The Msungu gave him a rupee which he dropped into a hole in the banjo.

This happened on one of the days when the sun shone. But there came a cold snap in the month of May just when we were hoping for fine weather. One Sunday morning we all began to shiver. The Msungu suggested that we should take a walk to warm us while a fire was lit on the drawing room floor. When we returned we had native service in the dining room instead of the comfortless little building outside.

I doubt if our room was much better. The wind blew through the insecure door and through the narrow windows at each side of it. My feet were benumbed. I tried to tuck them under my skirts beneath the table. I saw from the Msungu's face that he was suffering also. Only the Doctor, in his usual place opposite him, looked calm and placid as became the occasion.

After lunch we cowered over the drawing room fire that was now blazing cheerily, but it seemed only to warm the surface of our skin. At last the Msungu threw himself on the couch. There was a flush on his cheek. At intervals he trembled. I covered him with rugs and blankets and ran for the Doctor, whom I found dispensing medicine out of his end window to a group of natives. He came without any delay, but we knew that it was the usual fever.

After a hot bottle was applied and a hot drink

partaken of the Msungu felt comfortable. Indeed his face changed to a serene content, or rather an exalted expression took the place of the look of suffering and discomfort. He seemed asleep; but he told us afterwards that he had imagined himself composing poetry of the highest quality. Yet he was quite sensible and made a mental note of the splendid lines so that he could write them down next day. He even wondered how he should have blossomed into such a poet all in a moment. He thought that the day of humble work was past for ever, that henceforth men would sing his praises. How different I felt when I had fever. I tossed and suffered till the perspiration broke out.

But we knew nothing of his thoughts; had we done so perhaps we would have given him less sympathy. The public may say it was a pity and probably a loss to the world that he did not repeat them to us. Let the Msungu speak for himself. He *did* remember them when he came out of his fever, but he now says they were "awful rot."

The Doctor and I sat patiently beside his couch all that day, our weary watch being only disturbed by the boy coming in with fresh fire-wood, and a brief adjournment for dinner. That meal over we assisted the Msungu to his proper bedroom. A powder was prescribed for him at a certain time

during the night. The Doctor departed shortly to his own house, and shivering with cold I was glad to lie down also, hoping to awake at the right moment. But I need not have been anxious on that score. I could not sleep. My head ached dreadfully. I tossed and turned, and burned and shivered.

At two o'clock, the time arranged, I crawled out of bed, trying to collect my wandering senses. I struck a light, mixed the powder, awoke my husband and gave him the medicine.

Back to bed again, shivering with ague, I gathered the blankets close around me and tried to get warm. Then I burned with a dry skin that seemed like bursting. I doubt if I slept any that night. I knew I had fever, but dared not succumb till my husband was better. How often had I been ill with the Msungu faithfully attending me. This was the first fever he had had since I came to the mountain.

As the morning dawned a gale of wind stormed outside; the rain poured. I felt cold drops falling on my face. I struggled up and dressed myself, after tea had been brought in by the boy. I wrapped a shawl and my travelling cloak round me. As I feared, the pillows were wet. I put on fresh slips, and with the aid of Bwanali drew out the bed from the wall.

Drip, drip ! The rain still came down, preferring the bed to any other quarter. I got an umbrella and put it over the Msungu's head. He complained of a draught. I made a screen by covering chairs with a sheet and arranged it in the proper place. Then I got the fire lit in the middle of the floor.

The Doctor came in before breakfast with the news that he had just received a note calling him to see a white man along the hill who was bad with fever. In half an hour I was left in sole charge of my patient and the Mission Station.

I don't remember how I got through the forenoon. The Msungu was too exhausted to see my distress ; but in the afternoon he noticed me shivering over the smoky fire, wrapped in all the garments I could carry. He asked me to hand him his thermometer, then tried my temperature. It was 102°.

Perhaps I would have been wiser had I tried his temperature at that moment. Then possibly we might have conscientiously exchanged places. As it was I stuck to my post.

Dinner time came. We knew that the soup and fowl would be ready. The Msungu had no appetite and a cold drink was all I craved for. Yet we must eat.

" Tell the boy to cut up the fowl in small pieces

and put them in the soup." said my husband. "We can take it easier that way."

I rose obediently, but turned back at the door. "What do you say for 'cut it small'?" I asked.

"Akate panandipe," answered the Msungu.

I faced the wind and the rain, repeating and repeating the words as I went to the kitchen. The boys understood me for a wonder, and soon our dinner was served in the bedroom.

The meat soup certainly strengthened us. I believe that many a fever proves unnecessarily fatal owing to the patient's unwillingness to eat; and where there is no proper attendant this often happens. Besides nourishment, what an amount of quinine we took! On one occasion, I remember, I had forty grains in one day.

Next morning I was the patient. The Msungu was better though weak. He got up after breakfast, and with what relief I turned round in bed and closed my eyes. The Doctor returned in the forenoon. For days I was troubled with a low recurring fever. When at last I was pronounced cured I was weak and spiritless.

CHAPTER XIX

MY GIRLS EXCEL

THE Doctor was kept very busy. There was generally a number of natives in front of the window from which he dispensed his medicine. Even the goats had their turn. One broke its leg, which had to be put in splints. And outside the Mission there were frequently men who required his services.

After the Doctor had set up house he said to me one day: "There's no doubt about it, Donna, that running a house is the hardest work on earth. Truly women get the worst end of the stick all through."

Yet he had the best cook, but like all good servants he had his faults. He dearly loved taking holidays and going to dances, and probably he was the most to blame that night when the girls disappeared. Yet it was difficult to be angry with him. He had such a genial, jolly expression, perhaps because he was in love with Mele; but we did not know that then. We had yet to learn

that love is much the same all the world over.

On one occasion when Masamani was recruiting himself, and the Doctor experiencing all the woes of house-keeping, I received a letter from the latter. It was hardly expected, as I had seen him already several times that day. Naturally I opened it with some curiosity and read the following :—

"Dear Donna,

"Will you kindly give me a piece of bread.

"Yours truly,

"G. R.——"

Fortunately I was well supplied as I baked almost every day, but my scones were not equal to Masamani's. If my cook, Mlenga, was inclined to make them sometimes the shape of feet, or by way of variety like half-moons, the Doctor's cook never varied from a fat round little scone, yellowed with eggs and puffed like a sponge. All our bread, as I have previously indicated, was raised by soda and lemon juice when we could procure the fruit, failing the latter we used baking powder, but that quickly deteriorated in that climate.

One day, anxious for a change, the Msungu procured some native beer, a white milky liquid, to use as yeast. He said that he would make the bread entirely himself. After many failures, at

last he succeeded in producing a small loaf. Of course I had to praise it, but my conscience was clear as it was a lovely golden brown with a creamy white crack on the top. Nothing would satisfy him, however, but that I should sketch it. So I produced my block and water-colours, and, after expelling the family of baby cockroaches that unaccountably crowded within my box, I began my study.

There is interest even in painting a loaf. The subtle yellow grey shadows, the tender lights, and the russet browns of the crust were more agreeable to me than the other studies the Msungu brought me. He had a weakness for shooting birds. Yes, I will call it a weakness, for I think the birds that decorate the landscape and fill the air with sweet sounds should be allowed to live their little life. It was all very well to shoot the partridges; they strengthened us for our work. But he did not discriminate. He would bring me one at a time and arrange it on the floor of the verandah, then call me out to paint it. There was the raven, or the "Parson," as it was called by the white man, with its broad white collar and greeny-black coat; and the Chitotolo, a grey hawk, which, excepting its bill, resembled very much the cuckoo.

When I sat down to paint the Chitotolo I was

horrified to see that it still breathed. I hastily called the Msungu, who immediately put it out of pain.

"How could you shoot it?" I said, almost sobbing. "Just think of it soaring o'er those wonderful valleys, so full of the joy of living—and your gun brings it down, and ends its existence for ever."

"When you put it that way it does seem cruel," said my husband, "but I only thought of it as a model for your painting."

From that day he never brought me any more birds.

But baking and shooting were not the only pastimes the Msungu enjoyed. One day our native hunter brought us a piece of wild boar. My husband was in his element, for he had developed quite a mania for ham and egg, a dish he had never tasted since leaving the steamer. All that forenoon he was punching and kneading with salt and spice a large piece of the pork on the table in the verandah. A group of boys stood round him watching eagerly the operation. It was a day or two later when the meat was being smoked in a barrel, that Kambona imagined Luwiya was the victim inside.

But the Msungu was forced to relinquish his task for the time being. A native appeared with

a letter. It proved to be an invitation to a wedding at Blantyre Mission. But it did not excite me pleasurably as one might have expected. I dreaded society, and felt that it would be an effort even to speak. I had wearied to see a white woman. I did not now. I was as lonely as ever, but my life was fuller, and but for the malaria and the want of my relations, I would have desired no change.

Still, I would not have it said that I held aloof. It was decided that we should go. My girls would accompany me, and perhaps for the short time they might attend the school at Blantyre.

It certainly excited me. I had not been from home since our mid-night trip to Madza-ku-samba's, and that could hardly be called a holiday. For the intervening weeks my mind was full of the trip. What should I wear? The feminine vanity was not yet smothered. What would my girls think of the fine houses and the beautiful church, and the refined civilization? Mount Mlanje and the Plain comprised all their world at present. Our little three-roomed mud-house, in comparison with their tiny huts, seemed a mansion.

The morning before our journey I rose early. Going over to a small window in a recess in my bedroom I called Mlenga, the cook, and told him

to kill three fowls, as I purposed making a pie for the "ulendo" (*journey*).

Immediately there was a racing through the courtyard and a sound of cackling hens, then silence and a leisurely tread to the cook-house. I finished my dressing, then went out to see how the work was proceeding. The boys were seated inside the kitchen, not plucking fowls as I expected, but lazily enjoying themselves. Then I saw to my horror that the three fowls were already simmering in a pot on the fire. I dared not ask any questions. I returned to the house feeling rather sick.

Next morning shortly after dawn we started on our journey. Namonde, the chief, was down on the Plain to wish us "Moni."

We carried ample provisions, including the chicken pie, but for the first time on a journey I could not eat with any relish. Our way was comparatively easy, for since my arrival at Mlanje the British Government had extended the road, which my husband had cut, as far as the Tuchilla river. Consequently the men ran along without interruption of branches, rocks and stumps of trees. Owing to the straightness of the way we were also saved the climb over the little hill, Medima, where we had pitched our tent on my first journey across the Plain. As we wished to

reach Blantyre that night we rested no longer than was necessary. We saw again our hospitable friends at the Limbe where we had been so kindly entertained. There, we only got away by promising to spend a few days with them on our return journey.

We arrived at our destination before sunset. We stayed with the Doctor and his wife. It was a treat to see a well furnished house again. I gazed round my bedroom with rapture. Except for a large " mtungwi " (*a native travelling basket*) everything else was English make. There was not even one tin box to stand in lieu of a table or chair. There was no brick floor which you could sweep off by degrees, filling your lungs with red dust, but a smooth flat carpet which felt luxurious to your feet. There was also a ceiling, a real white ceiling.

The drawing room seemed perfectly dazzling. I sat down shy in the corner and envied the other ladies, who had come in to spend the evening, with their flow of talk. I was not in it. Mount Mlanje had struck me dumb.

Suddenly a sharp knock came to the room door. I turned round and saw our cook Mlenga's round, red face protruding through the narrow opening. He, with some other boys and our girls, had accompanied us.

"Sala!" (*hunger*) he said. His eyes looked large and full of astonishment.

The Msungu at once left the room to arrange about food for our natives. I was left pretty much to myself the whole evening till one of the older ladies came over and spoke to me for a little. I was stiff, horribly stiff. Mlanje, my new parent, though she had deprived me of speech, had still left me a good share of pride.

I blame myself. Nobody wished to treat me badly. My hostess could not have been kinder. She had much to do. Indeed I thought that she must have abnormal strength to do what she did.

To add to her trials, next morning her black girls refused to work. She came to me in desperation. She had to give the wedding luncheon next day. "I have asked them to shake a carpet and they won't do it," she said.

"Perhaps my girls can help you," I said, glad to be of use; and, rising I went out to the verandah to call them. There they were sitting upon the steps, like the dogs who wait faithful outside. They required only one bidding. I was proud of them.

We got up daily at six o'clock. Breakfast was half an hour later. Shortly after it there was a service in church. Lunch was at eleven. About mid-day there was another service. Tea was

served at two o'clock and dinner at five. In the evening there was another service. That was the order of the day if I remember rightly. On Sunday there were four services.

I could not help wondering if that system were not a mistake; if the natives would perhaps think that God was only in temples made with hands; if it tended to make religion a thing of form, and toil instead of pleasure, and perhaps caused that laziness and pride that we heard so much of with regard to mission natives.

Quite a number of people had come to celebrate the wedding. Besides these there were two ladies who had lately arrived to do mission work. I had hoped that one of them would return with us to Mlanje, but time showed their minds were bent on more romantic projects. One of them came to me in great distress. A bottle of dark fluid had broken in one of her boxes. All her nice white clothes were stained. Of course my girls rinsed them to the best of their ability.

Some may say this was an instance of the "willin' horse getting the burden," and that they would have rebelled had they had more spirit. I don't think so. They were always glad to serve me, and often did so without any request. Besides, they were sensible enough to realise how much they got in return. If ever girls appreciated

education, they did. Also it shows that the Msungu's system of making each boy and girl, on entering the Mission, promise never to say "ngingu sosa" (*I do not wish*) had been a success.

The wedding was in the beautiful little church, and passed as all weddings pass. An ox had been killed as a feast for the natives. There was as much festivity as the place could offer. After nightfall the Msungu and I took a stroll through the Station. Passing a hut at the side of the courtyard I was startled to hear loud moans inside. The door was open and I saw, by the red glow of a fire in the centre of the room, a dark figure sitting on the floor.

"What is it?" I asked nervously.

"A native is dying in there," answered my husband solemnly. "That one is watching him. He was in the war up at the Lake and threw himself in front of a white officer who was hard pressed. He is mortally wounded."

"And he is to die in the dark," I said indignantly.

"It does not much matter when it comes to that," said the Msungu, "whether it is dark or light. For all we know it may be bright to him."

He hurried me into the house, but my happiness had gone. Unfortunately our bedroom was near the hut and half the night I lay awake hearing

the heavy groaning of the dying man. In the early dawn I heard Dr. S—— striding past our window, going in the direction of the hut. Then I became conscious that the groaning had ceased.

The man had died in the early dawn. I did not see any signs of a funeral. Possibly he was interred shortly after decease. In the forenoon I began to shiver. I sat in the dining room longing for the comforts of my rough house on Mlanje, where I could roll up the mat and light a blazing fire on the brick floor. I saw then that even a floor made of soft brick has its advantages. Yet the weather was hot again. The rainy season with its stormy winds had gone. I feared I was in for a dose of fever.

At last, when I could conceal it no longer, my hostess brought me a hot bottle in a flannel bag which she made me hug in my arms for warmth. I was thankful for it though it seemed to me that bed would have been better. Perhaps I had been coddled too much on Mount Mlanje. In Blantyre there was no time to make a fuss about trifles. I never saw the Doctor's wife idle for one moment ; if she was not flying about the house, or rushing down to church to attend a service, she was sewing linen or something useful.

Fortunately my fever did not last long. I was

better next day. On that afternoon we walked to Mandala to lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Moir, our prospective neighbours. We had a nice homely meal—a beefsteak and kidney dumpling, which we enjoyed to perfection. In the afternoon Sir Harry Johnson, H.M. Commissioner, called, and had tea with us.

After a week's visit we started homewards, breaking our journey at the Limbe as we had promised. Our host and hostess welcomed us like old friends. Tins of salmon and corned beef were opened to supplement the dinner of rice soup, fowls, sweet potatoes and rice. With these the black cook contrived to send in quite a number of courses.

Dinner over, the big wooden shutters were put up outside the unglazed windows, which were filled in with fine wire netting to prevent birds and the larger insects from entering. There was a pretty drawing room to which we retired. How home-like it looked. Pictures decorated the walls, which were covered with pink cotton with a frieze of dark blue muslin. Leopard and other skins lay on the floor and on a real couch. We almost forgot that the jungle surrounded us while a young planter, Mr. S——, gave us selections on his banjo.

Outside, a native watchman stepped on to the

verandah and marched slowly up and down, till growing weary he leant against the post at the entrance and fell sound asleep, his chin resting on the muzzle of his gun. Thus we found him on coming out for a breath of fresh air. Our host gently removed the gun, and the man awoke, much astonished and apologetic.

We went out under the starlight and gazed up at the Southern Cross. My heart was full. How far I felt from my native land. It seemed very doubtful that I would ever see it again. Then the strains of " Home, Sweet Home " came from the verandah, and we could not speak for a time.

We spent a happy week there. On the morning of our departure there was a great argument among the machilla men as to who would carry the white woman ; but my husband soon settled the dispute and I got into my machilla, hugging a large papia, a fruit like a melon, but with a very soft orange-coloured pulp. It was so ripe that my fingers pierced through it.

I was glad. My loneliness seemed coming to an end. The teacher, Mr. H——, who had travelled with me from England to Chiromo, was going to leave his post at Blantyre to teach our boys and girls on Mount Mlanje. Miss W——, the sister of our hostess of the Limbe, had promised

to pay me a long visit when she could accompany the Moirs to the mountain.

Our journey was without adventure. We found Namonde, faithful as ever, waiting to wish us "Moni" at the Tuchilla river. There I got a change of carriers so that I got far ahead of the Msungu. We had hoped to arrive at Mlanje before night-fall, but darkness came on us before we were off the Plain. At the Lekabula river the men slowed as they approached the bank. Their voices lowered. I caught the words "Donna" and "Msungu." The machilla was dragged through a tangle of bushes. My head was raised while my body slanted at an angle of 45° to the ground. Then I suddenly levelled. I saw a glint of light on the water. Splash! went the men's feet. My heart beat faster. But steadily they waded across to the other side.

Some natives passed us who said: "Moni Msungu," mistaking me for my husband. At the foot of the mountain my carriers stopped and asked me to get out of the machilla to wait for the Msungu. I stood in their midst and waited as patiently as I could. Around me were some fifteen or sixteen natives, all powerful men. The tall coarse grass, like spears, seemed to play guard at each side. Not a sound could I hear in the distance to tell me of the approach of the

others ; but the constant click, click, of the little creatures in the grass never ceased for one moment.

Suddenly Bwanali, our table boy, stepped out from that group of dark figures. How small and slight he looked compared with these strong men. Yet his presence was comforting. He raised his hand and pointing to the stars addressed the natives in an eager awed voice. I heard the word "Mlungu." He was telling them about God.

CHAPTER XX

AJAULA'S NEW NAME

"WHAT'S in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." That may be, but the African does not think so. He dearly loves to change his name. Not in marriage. He does not change it then as a rule, but whenever the fancy pleases him. Some important circumstance in his life he wishes to commemorate, so he casts away his old name for one more appropriate to the occasion.

It was very provoking, especially as I had so much trouble remembering his queer designations, and to make it worse, there was no limit to the names he might give himself.

One day, shortly after the wedding at Blantyre, the Msungu travelled some distance to see a chief in the hope of getting some more boys to educate. He brought home three. They were very raw,

and appeared at our little service the first evening, squatting on the floor beside the villagers. After prayers my husband asked their names. One of them quite innocently said: "Store." He had worked at a store at a planter's house and fancying the name had stuck to it.

But it was not from a similar cause that Ajaula changed hers. I was told one day that she had named herself "Aterere." I felt annoyed, not understanding the reason, and continued calling her Ajaula.

The Msungu always said: "There is no such thing as love, as we understand it, among the natives," and as I took all he said for Gospel then, I believed him. But a change took place in Ajaula, a subtle change one can hardly describe. I noticed it first when along with the other girls she was ironing in the dining room. A little smile, without any apparent reason, played round her lips, like the sun's glints on a woodland pool.

Then she would iron very slowly and dreamily, catching herself up sometimes with a sudden frown, when she would work viciously for a minute or two.

The other girls did not appear to see this change. Mele, the eldest, and fully developed, was really more of a child than the others. She was a natural poet and artist, often seeing in

something some resemblance to another ; telling stories with graphic illustration ; admiring everything lovely ; and imitating sounds with her soft laughing voice. " A gu gu gu pa window," she would say melodiously when some one tapped on the glass.

Achilandana was staid and matter of fact, yet sympathetic with an eagerness to be of use. There was no laziness in her. If I wanted anything she was the one I could most depend on.

Ajaula I had always placed in a lower scale. She was quiet, and gave the impression of slyness. Yet, though she was possibly the most commonplace and self-centred, it was evident now that something more akin to myself had dawned in her. I watched her curiously, not at first making out what was the subtle change. The girls were busy. A pile of white clothes lay to be ironed. I was sitting near the open door for coolness, feeling languid and limp in the heat.

Without the sun burned, a yellow glare. The red ground glowed. The air seemed to squirm. Across the road brilliant scarlet geraniums and orange-coloured capsicums grew in long rows outside the garden fence. In spite of the shade I was very hot, and the girls' faces were shining with moisture. Mele grumbled. The irons had not the proper heat. Ajaula and Achilandana,

who were responsible for the fire in the kitchen, went out for others.

Mele rested against the cupboard with a finger in her mouth. By and by the younger girls sauntered in. Mele seized the iron, spat on it, held it to her cheek in the orthodox way, and scolded volubly.

I went round to the kitchen to enquire into matters. The younger girls followed me. I found the place deserted, and the fire out under the girdle on which the irons were heated. I tried to scold the offenders with my very limited vocabulary. They both laughed. I slapped them lightly on their bare shoulders. They looked aggrieved. I sent them for wood and told them to make up the fire. When this was accomplished I gave them a sweet each, poor disciplinarian that I was.

By and by the ironing was resumed, Mele at one side of the table, Ajaula opposite her. Achilandana was left to attend the fire and irons.

Kasawala, the chief's son, wearing his red Fez cap, passed the doorway. He glanced in with a smirk, and in spite of Ajaula's dusky colour I was sure she blushed. She instantly cast down her eyes. Her long eyelashes trembled on her cheeks. She seemed very intent on her work; but that curious smile played about her lips again.

I understood her now. She was in love with

Kasawala. Had it been the red Fez cap, or the white trousers, that he had made in private with great pains, that had attracted her? As far as I knew he had only had courage to wear them once. I had seen him on that eventful occasion careering through the back courtyard and into the dormitory as if almost ashamed of this unusual piece of clothing. Or was it love, unfathomable love, that had captured her without any knowledge of what it was or why it had come?

Then I noticed that Ajaula's plain face was transformed. There was a new softness in her expression, a sparkle in her narrow eyes, more often hidden now by the long dark lashes. The new curves on her mouth had shortened to sweetness her long upper lip. Her flat breasts heaved and rounded with the new emotion.

I told the Msungu, but he laughed at me of course, and said that I was always romancing, and I could not be positive for surely he knew more than I did. Yet it did seem significant that Ajaula about this time changed her name. Never again was she to be called Ajaula. Henceforth, until some other great event in life should seem to her of more importance, her name would be "Aterere"—which simply means "Tra-la-la"—the refrain of a song.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LIKOMBA, AND OTHER FRIENDS

I DID not hear of Kasawala changing his name. The dawn of love, which is such an unforgetable time to a young woman, is not so to a youth, probably because his object has been more easily obtained.

Yet a change did show itself even in him. Though discarding his white trousers, as far as our knowledge went, he had other and greater ambitions. The Msungu, wisely or otherwise, had refrained from teaching the boys English as those who knew even a smattering of it were apt to be taken by planters who were too careless to acquire the language of the country. Consequently the lads would leave the Mission, and in many cases only picked up the bad habits of the men they worked for.

I was therefore very much surprised, one day, during the Doctor's absence, as I was crossing the courtyard, to hear Kasawala call out: "Zee

Doctol ees comm-ing . . . bad boy . . . I am go-ing . . . home to-day."

I wish now that I had laughed then, and given the boy a look of appreciation, but I pretended not to hear. Vain regrets. They sting me yet when I think of my boys whom I shall never see again.

But the incident did not linger in my thoughts. When the Doctor arrived I hurried to prepare some lunch for him. While he was partaking of it we listened to his news, part of which was rather startling.

While he had been attending his patient, who was laid down with fever through working in virgin forest, he had heard that an officer at the Military Station along the mountain, had been stabbed by a native. It had been done so suddenly and unexpectedly that it flabbergasted everybody. Late in the evening the officer had gone into his room for something. It was quite dark. He was groping his way across the floor, when all at once, three heavy blows fell on his chest. He was not conscious of any knife. But he cried out, and when his comrades found him he was seen to be stabbed in three places.

This piece of news rather unsettled me. The Msungu had impressed on me so often that a native would never attack a white man that my

confidence was shaken. For some months now I had gone about our place without any fear of the people. How often had I not crossed the courtyard after dark, carrying my lantern, hardly afraid even of the " chisui " (*leopard*) ? How often had I not left the dining-table to get some jam from my store off the bedroom ? Then I would never think of taking a light, but grope my way through the dark room, and drawing aside the curtain, enter the store. A scuttling of rats would take place. Nothing worse. I had no fear of them. The long row of shelves lay in front of me crowded with preserves of all kinds. I knew that my jam lay in little blue tins on the lowest shelf. It was quite a game to reach forth my hand, feel for a tin at random, carry it to the lighted room, and see what fortune had given me. The Msungu chuckled if it were strawberry ; I, if it proved black-currant.

But now it was different. When I had occasion to go outside with the lantern the Msungu accompanied me. When I wanted jam to eat with our pancakes I entered the dark room, dreading every moment a stab in my breast. My breath grew short as I reached the store, where I grasped a tin and rushed back again, my husband never guessing that I was frightened.

But that scare passed like all the others. We

heard that the officer had not been as seriously wounded as we had at first supposed. It was reported to have been a case of jealousy, provocation at least. I laughed at my fears, and agreed with the Msungu that we were perfectly safe.

I got a baby likomba, a kind of lemur, resembling a small monkey. It was a soft grey furred animal with little hands and feet which it could use almost like a human being. But how cold its hands were, and how viciously it bit and clutched.

At first it sat on the back of the verandah seat and stared at us with its large owl-like eyes, not a bit afraid, but prepared to bite us with its sharp teeth. It seemed impossible to tame, though it evidently did not object to our society. I used to leave a little Swiss milk on my chest of drawers, go away, and returning find it gone ; but there was no sign of the likomba. But soon it began to make its appearance, coming nearer and nearer each time, till I could take it in my arms and fondle it as I would a cat.

It preferred to live inside the roof. I know not what part, but it would suddenly drop into my arms and hug me like a baby.

It lived principally on fruit, yet it did not disdain tea. Nearly every morning it appeared as we were having our early cup in bed. Then it

would try to take the lid off the sugar basin, and once actually fought for the tin of Swiss milk, holding it tight with both hands, growling and spitting like a cat while the Msungu tried to get it.

But its nocturnal habits rendered it a troublesome pet. It would awake me by licking my cheek with its rough tongue, then make a dive under the blankets, right over us and out at the foot. All sleep was over after its appearance. Ultimately I was forced to seize it by the tail and imprison it under a "lukalala" (*creel*) on the floor.

One night we thought the house was on fire. In the darkness two red eyes gleamed from the roof; another time a dreadful uncanny sound awoke us. The little likomba had found its voice for the first time.

After purchasing this pet we were pestered by natives bringing all manner of creatures to us. I did not want them. I hate to see a wild animal in captivity. A pathetic sight, one day, was a large baboon in a wicker cage hugging its little one close to its breast. Then I said emphatically that I would have no more living creatures, and as it happened the likomba was the last.

All these months I had been regularly teaching my girls in the afternoons, reading, writing and

sewing. I would rise up from my siesta feeling more tired than when I lay down, what with the heat and the flies that gave me no peace. I would hear my girls chattering and laughing in the verandah where I gave them their lessons. There I would sit on the ledge of the open drawing room window, my pupils at my feet with their books and slates, very eager to learn. They were quick to master the letters, but the words at first were a trouble. For instance, when I wished them to spell and pronounce the word "moto" (*fire*), they would say—"m . . o mo, t . . o to, tomo," putting the last syllable first. But in a month they got over that.

Often Ndendemele would appear with swaying gait, her brow dripping with castor oil. How earnestly she listened, sitting on the ground beside us, her mouth open, showing her even row of white teeth, each of which had been deeply nitched. Poor Ndendemele, all romance, if there is such a thing in the African's life, was over for her. Being a married girl she had to pound the corn for her husband's food, hoe the ground, and mud the house when they built a new one. In fact, all the heavy work fell to her.

What a relief it was to the Msungu and me when Mr. H—— arrived, for however good a preacher my husband might be, teaching did not come

natural to him. No longer did I have to curtail my afternoon's rest by teaching the girls. The little church as before did duty as school as well as workshop. It is a thing of the past now. It was burnt down when the trouble came.

Not only did the teacher relieve me from my class, and my husband from his, but in a hundred ways he made life easier. A little corner wardrobe gradually grew to completion in my bedroom. A draught-screen was in progress when the event happened which forced us to leave our little home on the mountain.

Shortly after his arrival the Moirs, accompanied by my visitor, Miss W——, came to Mlanje. The former stayed with us one night. Strange, I have but a dim recollection of that particular day, though it was of so much importance to me. Never again was I to be the only white woman on the great mountain. That position may seem enviable from some points of view. I was made much of, petted no doubt. I could boast of being the first white woman on Mount Mlanje. I had no one to be jealous of, or jealous of me. But oh, the loneliness of it. However kind and tender a man may be he lacks that subtle sympathy and understanding which a good woman has. He lacks the patience to listen to the feminine trifles that interest most of our sex.

Yet I remember that our Station was crowded for once. What a bustle there was! One came upon strange black boys and girls at every corner. A horse that had escaped the dreaded Tsetse fly stood in the back courtyard. Our natives surveyed it as we would a prehistoric animal. Many were their exclamations. The length of its limbs were expatiated on. They drew comparisons between it and a zebra. What noise did it make? They roared to hear how it would answer.

With difficulty we accommodated our large company. "Mandala" slept in the Doctor's house, where Mr. H—— had also made his abode for the present. The Msungu occupied the drawing room, we ladies my bedroom. Mrs. Moir's black girls, and a hamper of pups shared the dining room with Mele, Ajaula and Achilandana.

We had lain down for a quiet night's rest when suddenly a commotion started in the next room—a yelping and scratching which made it impossible to sleep. We heard the Msungu running in. I followed suit. The pups were liberated. There were squeals from the girls as the animals rushed to their bare feet, protruding from the blankets.

How we fell asleep again I don't know. The girls must have had a night of it. As it was I could have slept in a worse noise. There was peace

and thankfulness in my heart. These women were congenial to me. Henceforth, I thought, we would see each other often. But how little we know what is before us. The Moirs departed early next morning and I never saw them again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DOCTOR'S DINNER, AND A PICNIC

MISS W—— proved a most kind and sympathetic companion. It was in expectation of her visit that the Msungu had built up the little recess in the drawing room, adding it to the store to be used as a dressing room, in which, but for my timely intervention, I jokingly tell him, he might be still.

Every morning my girls were requisitioned to assist our guest in lifting mats, sweeping and dusting, and as she was very particular, they fretted a little. Perhaps the reason of it was that her black boy Koopy lolled lazily outside meanwhile. He was small and fat with apparently not much intelligence, and I am afraid not benefitted by his mistress's indulgence.

"Now Koopy," she would cry in English, "Come in at once and put on your hat, or you'll get a headache in that hot sun."

And Koopy would grin as if he quite understood,

although it must have been an unintelligible sound to him. Indeed it was quite common for Europeans, who did not know the native language, to address the boys in English. If they introduced one solitary Yao, or Manganja word it was thought quite sufficient. The planters were the worst in this respect. Hurrying to get his dinner, one day, Madza-ku-samba called :

"Lumguje, bring in the 'mbalis' (*dishes*)." And though the plural of a native word is not formed by adding an *s* they invariably understood what was wanted.

Another cause of jealousy the girls had. Koopy possessed a hat, an article of dress that a native has no need of. Even with their shaven heads the girls could sit out in the hottest sun.

With my girls being occupied in Miss W——'s room in the morning, I had much more to do, and my dining room was not so simple as formerly. Aiming at refinement I had placed a number of native mats on the soft brick floor, as now it was the hot season there would be no need of a fire. But they were stiff and clumsy, being made of reeds, and had an awkward way of sticking up at each end, and creaking when we walked. Also I discovered painfully that the fleas highly approved of them. It was common for six or seven of them to jump on my hand simultaneously.

So I discarded the mats and would gladly have sunk into the primitive life again had not the men, stimulated by the presence of another woman, begun to think of their personal appearance. They rummaged their boxes and brought out white collars for me to wash and iron.

And such scorching weather it was. My spirit would have failed me altogether had not Miss W—— expressed her willingness to help me. When at last I handed the collars to their respective owners I stipulated that they must wear only one a week.

Had the Doctor heard me ? He there and then produced a fine white shirt, and said : " It is quite clean, only needs to be starched and ironed. When I go into Blantyre, you see, I would like to cut quite a dash."

I must own that I was disagreeable, but blame the climate, please. I carried the shirt into my house as one would carry a rat by the tail. I found the Msungu and Miss W—— seated in the drawing room.

" However can I do it," I said, helplessly. " I never dressed a shirt in my life. The collars were bad enough, but this—"

Miss W—— said that it would be quite simple if we had only a breast-board.

" But I have not got one," I remarked.

Then the Msungu, as usual, was equal to the occasion. "Tell the Doctor," he said, "that you will do his shirt when he makes you a breast-board." And he dismissed the subject.

So in as pleasant a manner as possible I told the Doctor. He smiled good-naturedly, and when I asked him how soon it would be ready, he said "Kaya" (*I don't know*). Like the Yao word "kwalini," "kaya" is said with a raising of the brows and a lifting of the shoulders, a gesture which makes you inclined to shake one.

I laid the shirt, neatly folded, away in one of my boxes. Days passed. No board was forthcoming. Miss W——, of greater soul than I, grew lenient, and begged me to give her the shirt and she would dress it without a board. But I was stubborn. No, the shirt would remain where it was till the board was made.

It did, and, as far as I am concerned, it is there still, for the box and its contents passed from my keeping in the trouble that now was creeping so near.

But the Doctor was as serene as ever. I think nothing would have disturbed his tranquility but the losing of his precious sideboard. He contented himself with his one collar a week, and seemed to have forgotten that he had ever had another garment.

Yet we ladies were not without our vanity. The Doctor's dinner on the Thursday was, as I said before, the event of the week. Then I began to follow Miss W——'s example by dressing myself carefully, and sticking a bunch of acacia blossom in my hair as it looked so pretty in hers. I think I see us rustling along to the Doctor's house, the evening breeze stirring the acacia trees above us, the great hills darkening beyond the Station, and the Plain melting into the after-glow beneath us. Past the garden we went, where the large yellow pumpkins lay sleeping on their green leaves, into the Doctor's bright room, with its superior brick floor, its cool white-washed walls, and the magnificent sideboard.

What a dinner it was. Kambona and Mbosange waited splendidly in their long white robes, the former with great dark eyes gleaming; the latter tall, and bending with obsequious attention. Masamani had produced food fit for the gods. There were several courses. Delicacies we knew not of would appear mysteriously—a piece of mutton and msungu "mbatata" (*English potatoes*) Chicken formed always one course. But what chicken! Miss W—— and I puzzled often and long as to how it was done. I thought it larded with ground-nuts, cut in slices, for it gave way in the mouth with a delicious nutty flavour. If

we expressed ourselves anxious to learn its composition the Doctor was most evasive. He would pretend not to observe that it was anything out of the common. There was no use approaching Masamani. We seldom saw him except at the evening service, and then it would hardly have been a fitting subject. He did borrow sometimes from me, but he was too big a man to come himself. Maganga, his assistant, would be sent.

In honour of our visitor a picnic was planned to the Lekabula river. We would all go for once. Robert Tause would remain in charge. I eagerly packed several baskets. Weight was no consideration as our girls and several of our boys would accompany us.

Contrary to our former picnic, our way was all down hill in the direction of Mkanda, the chief's country. In front of us, beyond the Plain, rose the faint blue peaks of Mount Zomba, the seat of H.M. Commissioner—Sir Harry Johnson. Down the narrow path, brushing against the long coarse grass, heedless of grass-ticks, we went single file, I, feeling particularly light of heart, never imagining that anything wrong could be happening at home.

Arriving at our destination we perceived that the river here has a double bed, the first perfectly dry at this season and each bordered thickly

by high trees and dense vegetation. We sat down on a large flat rock in the dry bed. Near us great empty cauldrons had been drilled in the stone where once on a day red pools must have whirled. Above us a chitotolo hawk spread its grey wings and passed over the variegated woods. A smell of wood smoke whiffed past us, and a fire blazed merrily. Tea was soon made. What appetites we had, at least I had. Cold vermicelli pudding, scones and jam were consumed and I was still hungry.

At the fire the girls and boys were feasting on sweet potatoes roasted in the hot ashes. These roots are long-shaped and delightful cooked that way. I secured one of them, and after peeling off its black burnt skin ate it with great relish.

Finished, Achilandana seized the empty pudding dish and running to the river returned with water to wash my hands and mouth. I was surprised and pleased to see the child so thoughtful. One got so faithless and heartless sometimes.

Our meal over, I went to the edge of the river and began a water-colour sketch looking up the deep valley. But how impossible it was. My brain could not take it in. Hill above hill rose at each side of the watercourse, the nearer ones having every shade of colour, greens melting into purples, purples into cobalt blue, ending with a

stretch of golden cliff high above, like a distant vision of the walls of the New Jerusalem.

I could have shed tears. I gave up my sketch in despair. My head ached. My eyes were dazzled.

Mr. H—— appeared with a handful of immense seed-pods which he had found growing by the river. How much happier he, who had filled his heart with objects within his reach. Yet though I regretted then what I thought had been waste of time and energy, I am glad now that I have the sketch, though it is but a faint shadow of the real.

As we turned homewards the girls came up to us strongly smelling of musk. In vain the Msungu asked them the secret of the odour. They would only giggle and confusedly look at each other.

When we got home everything seemed as we had left it, but next day on opening a large tin box, I missed a pair of blankets and some underclothing. My heart sank. I turned over all the contents again. They were gone without a doubt. Who had done it? Each boy looked more innocent than the other.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MAGIC HORN

IT was a case for the chief. Namonde was sent for. He came at once full of astonishment and talk. He sat in the verandah opposite the Msungu, very grave, and apparently eager to discover the culprits. He was perfectly certain that none of the boys were guilty. They loved their " atate " (*father*) far too much to wrong him willingly, and valued their education above all things. Besides, how should they require to steal blankets and clothes when the generous Msungu supplied them so plentifully ? No, some of those cur-like people from the Banana village must have entered the house in our absence. He would make a search and endeavour to get our goods again.

Meanwhile I wandered through the dining room, nervous and distrustful, hearing their voices outside, but understanding only an occasional word. I knew that the Msungu had a loaded revolver concealed in his pocket. Once in a similar

situation he had called to me not to be alarmed if he fired it. "I may only do it to frighten him," he had said.

No wonder that my heart beat faster. In spite of my husband's sanguine assurances I had a suspicion that he, as well as the Doctor, distrusted the natives, especially the chiefs.

But each day the "magambo" passed quite peaceably, yet without the case getting any clearer. We began to blame ourselves for putting temptation in the natives' way. We had expected too much. The Msungu said that I had no business bringing out so many things. He had not room to move with all these boxes. Could not one have sufficed me? How could I possibly require so many dresses when two suits were ample for him?

In vain I told him that I had made provision for five years. "Five years!" he scoffed, "a quantity like that should last a life-time." His ideal was the simple life. He did not mind a bit how he looked. (I quite believed it when he would sit on the edge of the verandah with his knees up to his chin.) "Did I think," he concluded, "that I had come out to teach the heathen the Paris fashions?"

There was some truth in his remarks. I began almost to believe that I was really the chief

culprit. If they had only stolen his things now I might have lifted up my head.

One day the Msungu asked Mele what the natives did to a person suspected of stealing. She was all animation. Her eyes flashed. She raised her bare arm, then dropping it swiftly, and pointing to a part above the elbow, said in Yao: "They make them plunge their arm, up this length, in boiling water."

One morning a native arrived with a wicker cage filled with fowls. The Msungu bought them and told him to go round to the store, where he would pay him.

This store was attached to the boys' dormitory. It was a mud building raised a couple of steps from the ground, having a thatched roof and narrow verandah, but no windows. In it he kept bales of cotton, coloured blankets, jackets and shirts for the boys.

Remembering the theft, the Msungu entered the store, and locked the door carefully behind him. He perceived a "malaja" (*jacket*) lying on the table. He wondered how it had got there. Possibly it might have fallen from the shelf. He lifted down a bale of unbleached cotton and returned to the verandah, again locking the door.

He measured out a length of cloth, from one stretched arm to the other, six times, the price

of the chickens. Then he returned to the store to replace the bale. There he stood amazed. In that short interval of five minutes the jacket had vanished from the table.

It seemed magic. There was certainly no one else in the store, as there were no dark corners for any one to hide. The room was bare except for the table and the rows of shelves covered with goods. He examined the latter attentively. Blankets and various other things seemed to have decreased in number.

He came out, locking the door heartlessly behind him, and returned to the house. Lunch was on the table. We sat down and he told us this new trouble. We feared greatly that one or more of our boys was the guilty party. It was not difficult to guess which of them we trusted least—Kasawala, Namonde's son. Still a prejudice was no proof. Besides the Msungu was almost sure that he had seen him standing with the other boys when he came out of the store. How one could have entered with the door locked was a problem, an impossibility in fact.

Immediately my thoughts flew to the queer story about Namonde and his little magic horn. Could it be true then that this horn, with the hairy tail, had the wonderful power ascribed to it ? Could it actually dance and tell him things ?

Could it give him power to make any one steal or kill without being found out ?

Of course it was ridiculous, viewing it from a calm standpoint. But here we were, lonely, depressed by a malarious climate, surrounded by awe-inspiring scenery ; the very sounds—drums beating weirdly, the wailing in the still air, the chuckling of the baboons, and the everlasting click, click, at nightfall, were nerve wracking.

But the Msungu, matter of fact, determined to find a rational explanation. At last after a hard search he discovered a small opening under the thatch at the eaves in the store, where a small boy might enter.

Mpojola, Kasawala's little brother who played about the Station almost naked ! Poor child with the chubby face, had they made him do it ?

But all this was supposition on our part. It might still prove to be one of the outside natives, untaught and ignorant, of whom we had no reason to expect gratitude. We were fain to hope so.

Sitting at breakfast next morning, puzzling what we would do, I suggested that some broken glass might be put in the hole under the thatch. If any of the boys were guilty we would see cuts on their hands or persons.

It seemed cruel, but nobody could be hurt except the thief, and a little smart would be good

for him. The Msungu, for a wonder, quite approved of my plan. Some bottles were broken privately and placed in the secret opening. All day we waited. There was no sign. Next morning we lay awake expecting our morning cup of tea to be brought in. The likomba ran impatiently over the bed. At last I got up to inquire the reason of the delay. In the dining room I met the girls carrying the steaming tea-pot. They had made the tea for the first time.

"Where are the boys?" I asked, for I knew the language better now.

"They ran away very early in the morning," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXIV

NAMONDE'S TRIAL

I DON'T know how it was arranged. I dare not speak of it to my husband now. The word " Africa " is a dangerous subject. Whether it disturbs his nervous system, or that it causes regret that his heart's work was never accomplished, I cannot say. Thus I cannot explain why a band of Indian soldiers, the famous Sikhs, came to our Station about this time. They pitched their tents beyond the Doctor's house. They made no signs of war, but seemed to settle down to a homely visit. A great turbaned fellow would saunter along to us of a morning, and in a small gentle voice, quite out of keeping with his wild, bearded appearance, ask for a few capsicums. They grew abundantly, large red and yellow ones, beside the strip of geraniums opposite the front verandah.

Miss W—— was as much at home with them as she was with Koopy, and spoke to them in the same manner, although I never heard them say one word of English. Bending over the verandah railing she would accost one coming on an errand: "A lovely morning. How do you like this country? Don't you find those big turbans very hot and heavy?"

And the Indian would smile and nod, and jabber something quite unintelligible to me, but my friend would answer him as if she quite understood. I am sure there is a language to a gifted few, not in words, but in sounds and expression. Miss W—— was never at a loss for what to say, nor did she ever trouble herself to learn a foreign language. Dear kind friend, she is gone now. The malaria cut her off a few years after.

We also supplied the Sikhs with fowls, or rather we allowed them to help themselves. We would see one running, knife in hand, after a puny hen, for it is against their religion to eat anything strangled. One day we paid them a visit and got a taste of a chupatti—a large thin unleavened scone, something like the Scotch hot-water ones.

Then before we realised it they had gone. Like the Arabs, they had folded their tents and silently stolen away. There were only the round patches of crushed grass where their tents had

stood, and some feathers and litter to confirm us that they had actually been here.

And Namonde, the chief, the instigator of the theft, and Kasawala his son, had been taken with them.

Little Mpojola had been simply the tool they used. He was sent home for the meantime. Our other boys returned of their own accord. I daresay they had known what was going on, but were afraid to tell. I had a bad attack of neuralgia over the head of it, and lay moaning for most of a day, but the Doctor at last cured me, almost instantaneously, with Tincture of Cayenne.

Miss W—— had intended to stay a fortnight with me before going to the Moirs, but as a message came from the Fort telling the Msungu to attend the trial of the thieves, she prolonged her stay by a few days. It was the first time that I had been left alone for more than a day, and I felt the responsibility very much.

How lonely we two women felt. We consoled ourselves with the thought that the Doctor and teacher were not far away, but when alone in my bedroom for the night, how insecure the house felt with its shaky casements and thatched roof. Every sound outside had a new meaning, but I went to sleep nevertheless from sheer fatigue.

I could not have been long unconscious when a noise outside made me start up. Someone undoubtedly was approaching the house with quick heavy strides. The door rattled and the Doctor's cheery voice called: "Are you awake, Donna? Here's the Mail from home."

The Post! I was up in an instant, and throwing on my dressing gown opened the front door. The Doctor came in and emptied the sack of letters, papers and magazines on the table, while the girls stretched their necks from below to see what was the disturbance.

The coming of the Mail was always a great event. Letters in those days were at the least two months on the way, and we generally got a number from our friends of different dates. How gladly I locked the door behind the Doctor, after the correspondence had been divided, and hurried into the bedroom with my treasures. There I placed the candle in a convenient position, and sat up in bed, my feet tucked beneath the blankets, and read my letters. Soon my surroundings were forgotten. The jackal might howl wildly outside, the drums beat their loudest in the distance, I heard them not. I was again at home in the little house with the white clematis round the porch; the cool health-giving air was on my face, and my friends were with me. About

midnight they mingled in my dreams and I did not awake till morning.

Next day the boys took full advantage of the Msungu's absence. They roared, and rushed wildly through the back courtyard in the game of "Mpele" (it is played with a ball). Growing angry at last, and not feeling equal to saying "Chokani," as I had done on a memorable occasion, I went to the Doctor and asked him to stop them. I might have saved myself the trouble, however, the provoking man only shrugged his shoulders and told me to let them be. Returning I met my girls with their favourite request that I might send the women, who were mudding the teacher's house, for water in their stead so that they might go "quenda-jenda."

Next day a strange native came up to the verandah and looked through the railing at me. He carried on a stick a huge bunch of bananas, the ripest and largest I ever saw. It was my first experience of marketing there.

"What do you want?" I asked in my best Yao.

"Singano" (*needles*), he answered.

"How many?"

"Sitatu" (*three*), he replied firmly, and I ran to my room to get the needles lest he should change his mind. When I returned, and had

taken possession of the bananas he asked me diffidently for an empty bottle, which I gave him, and he went away delighted.

After an absence of three days the Msungu came back. I remember I wore a pink dress in honour of the occasion. It seemed an age since he left. People may talk of the happiness of a honeymoon, but there are times in one's life, even though one be old and faded, that far outweigh those over-rated weeks or days. Now that he was safely back I forgot how anxious I had been about his dangerous journey.

It is too painful to dwell on the trial at the Fort. Sufficient to know that Namonde was sentenced to one year's imprisonment; Kasawala to two months. We would much rather not have punished them, but if we had to live in comfort at all an example had to be made. Not only ourselves had to be considered, but every white man on the mountain.

To Kasawala it was only another adventure in his life—the native has no idea of disgrace—he would see more and learn more. He came back to the Mission, though we were not there to see him, and in course of time actually married Ajaula, *alias* "Aterere." Before this event Mele had been wedded to Masamani, the Doctor's cook. As for Namonde, he was spared to return to his

village, but during his absence the heir to the chiefdom had had full sway. There was another case of the "Mwai" drinking, and the "wizard" died.

The day after the Msungu's return Miss W—— left us to visit the Moirs along the mountain, and our old life began again. While my husband had been away I lost the likomba. I was not surprised, for being perfectly free, it might have returned to the bush. I did not search for it, but three days after, I remembered about the bananas, which I had quite forgotten. I went into the dark store off my bedroom where I had hung them, and, reaching out my hand, felt something soft and furry clinging to the bunch. It was my pet which had been lost and was found.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BUSH FIRES

WE had watched Miss W——'s machilla disappear down the path towards the Banana village. We now turned with a loneliness in our hearts to begin the old routine. But my energy seemed to have gone. The weather was extremely hot, hotter it seemed than last season, but perhaps the continuous malaria was telling on me. The Msungu proposed that we should go to the Linje where I would make a sketch. In the ravine how cool it was compared with the open. We sat on a rock in the middle of the gorge, the Msungu trifling with a native spear while I painted. The bed of the stream rose precipitously in front of us, rocky and dry save for the pools and white waterfalls gushing through the crevices. We were walled in by a thick curtain of green leaves ; graceful bamboos waved overhead.

For nearly a couple of hours we sat and I would

have stayed longer, but the Msungu hurried me home as the sun had got low, and leopards would be soon on the prowl.

In those days I did a good deal of sketching. My husband urged me to it, saying that I would be sorry some day if I did not take full advantage of my opportunities. I put my whole soul into these sketches, sometimes groaning unconsciously over them, and I never painted a shade or colour without seeing it in nature. Perhaps in the far future the public will be educated to appreciate a picture for its truth and merit, not as they do at present for the name and reputation of the artist.

Had I been well and strong I would have done better. But I was dull and languid ; the present seemed to hold me in a stifling grasp ; I could not think of the future. Possibly the Msungu saw this and wished to rouse me.

Everything I did then was an effort. I confess it now, that sometimes in these latter days I lay down in the little summer-house in the garden, wishing I would die there and then. But I did not allow myself to be idle often. Perhaps it would have been better if I had. I did not know then as I do now that the human temple is of more importance than one's house, and that one may do a great deal more for mankind by taking

rest, when it is required, than by wasting one's energy.

Formerly I had taken great pleasure in my cooking, but now even that was irksome. I was wont to bake out the scones and bread on a table in the verandah. Now that place seemed too hot, and I got the table brought into the centre room and placed near the door.

I had now a nice new kitchen, in the shape of a native hut, quite near my oven in the back courtyard. One half of it had a double wall, between which our ducks lived, with a little reed door to shut them in at night. Another improvement was in progress, in fact nearly completed. The back verandah was being walled in to exclude the draught from the dining room in the cold season, also to give me a shady place to bake and prepare my cooking.

Meanwhile I baked in the dining room. One day, at this occupation, my hands seemed powerless, my head heavy. Mlenga, the cook, had gone to see his father. The lemons which I depended on to effervesce the soda were done. The tins of baking powder had lost their strength. I thought longingly of Masamani's scones. I hinted gently to the Msungu that no doubt Masamani would be lounging in the Doctor's kitchen; that the Doctor could not possibly require him at present.

The result was, a whole pile of thick golden-crusted scones, light as a feather.

The fact was, I was ill, and this time it was not only the malaria. A change had come over me. I would be happy and sad by turns. I would gaze long and dreamily at pictures of little children in the magazines. At last I consulted the Doctor. He did not look the least concerned, nor did he prescribe for me. One would have thought that he had cast aside completely his medical profession. When he tired of my complaints he gave me a bottle of clear fluid. Crafty man! I have a strong suspicion that it was nothing but pure water.

And the girls went about their appointed tasks as blythe as ever. How patiently they swept the red dust off the verandah with a stiff bunch of everlasting flowers, bright yellow ones they found growing in the bush. But it was hot work even for them. Sometimes I found Mele stretched on a mat in my bedroom when she was supposed to be cleaning the room. Even the coarse grass withered and cracked in the burning heat. Only the insects displayed any vigour. They swarmed. One burrowing flea I picked out of my cheek. And the whole creation moved to the music of the frogs and grasshoppers.

Then I saw the Doctor and the Msungu hurry

out together. Men were set to cut down the grass around the Station, others to cut branches off the bushes. How they worked, as if for dear life. Then an ominous smoke came between us and the Plain, followed by a cruel, crackling noise. The bush fires ! They were creeping up the mountain, slowly but surely.

Men rush with the long branches in readiness to beat down the flames. There is shouting and excitement. The house is emptied. I, alone, stand awestruck on the verandah. The sun has dropped behind the peaked hills. A kindly coolness has come like a soft hand on a fevered brow. It is dark now save for the red glow in the distance. The terrible crackling noise grows louder. There is a smell of smoke, and burning grass. Then flames shoot up like bloody swords. The tall trees at the end of the garden stand calm, like martyrs awaiting their doom. Then I suppress a scream. An acacia tree has caught fire. It blazes and lights up the whole courtyard and the men beating down the flames.

The Msungu hurries towards me with the teacher behind him. "Don't be alarmed," he cries. "Mr. H—— will stay with you till we see everything safe."

For some time we watched the lurid sight from the verandah, but at length we went into the

little drawing room. It must have been a dull time for Mr. H——, who naturally would have liked to share the excitement outside. We did not speak much. I could not help thinking of all the living creatures that must be in that sea of fire ; but I could not long think seriously, for the little likomba sprang down suddenly from the roof, and capered over me till the Msungu came back.

Next morning all the jungle was charred and blighted save for a tree here and there that had escaped the fire. Now we could walk with freedom without being afraid of the grass-ticks that so provokingly stuck to one's clothes. Soon Nature would make the trees and flowers bud again, and the insect life be as prolific as ever. High up on the mountain the wild animals that were young and supple must have taken refuge. Not so the poor lepers, who had been left deserted in their little grass huts on the slopes, where for many days they had dragged out a dreary existence, separated from friends and home. But who can tell the joy of their departing, and the glory of their vision. Like Elisha of old they may have called out : " My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof " ; then ascended to Heaven in the fiery chariot.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FOREBODING

BEFORE another wet season we had hoped to build a brick house to make us more secure from the wind and rain. The bricks, works of labour through want of skill, lay in piles near the shed where we did our washing. The Msungu had written home to the Committee asking permission to build, as money would be required for the purpose. Great was our disappointment when word came that no expense was to be incurred as so much building had been done at Blantyre Mission. So we had to content ourselves with our mud house, and be prepared as best we could to combat the terrific storms on the mountain.

But trouble and disappointment were easier to bear now that our little company had increased. I looked forward to Miss W——'s return, and

when I heard the cheery sounds of her machilla men, I ran out to meet her.

"My dear, how are you?" she said, pressing my hand, and kissing me warmly; and I felt that my troubles had gone, and that I could bear anything. I also knew from her kind manner that she guessed what was the matter with me, yet neither of us breathed a word on the subject.

A day or two after, another visitor, a gardener, arrived to stay an indefinite time, as he had resigned his post in a neighbouring Mission. He was anxious to help us. So the Msungu determined to have a large garden filled with vegetables, seeing that he could not get a brick house. It was much needed. The gardener was delighted. A piece of ground was chosen between the Linje and Kuchilapa's hut. As it was on the slope of the mountain the garden would be arranged in several terraces. The work was begun at once. Indeed everything was shaping for a happier time, and the Doctor's prophecy that "one day something would happen" seemed but an idle remark.

Therefore it was unaccountable one morning that, with a new cheerfulness in my heart, I should become conscious of a strange odour or atmosphere reminding me of death. I had felt the same many years before when my mother lay dead in her room. But as far as I knew there was nothing

to cause it now. Everything was just as it had been. I was interesting myself again in my cooking and teaching. I had good company, and I never was considered morbid. Yet there it was. A subtle something that brought the old sad days back to me. I could only attribute it to imagination, but go where I would that sickly smell haunted me.

I was ashamed to mention it to any one as I knew I would be laughed at. After I had set a-going the dinner in the kitchen, leaving Kasaswichi gazing at the pots, I joined Miss W—— on the verandah. She was crocheting a shawl of a pretty fluffy pattern. I sat down beside her determined to learn the stitch. She looked up, her knitting fell to her lap.

"I have had such a curious feeling all day," she said seriously. "Do you know, I have distinctly felt the smell of a coffin."

A shiver passed through me. "Strange! I've been feeling it too," I said in an awed voice, "but it must be something about the place, that log of cedar, perhaps, with the extreme heat."

"I don't think so," said Miss W——. "We can't explain it, but simply I don't like it."

That was all. I have no explanation to make. I just tell the events as they happened. I daresay we thought no more about it. We might have

had a foreboding at the time, but it was soon forgotten. Other things took up our attention. The Doctor was taken ill with fever, fortunately not a bad case. The Msungu attended him as best he could. I made little custards, and delicacies for the invalid.

When he got better it was arranged that I should travel with Miss W—— to the Limbe where I should stay a few weeks with her sister. The teacher would accompany us, and little Achilandana would go as my servant. The Msungu sent out for machilla men. As soon as they came we were to be ready to start. Any morning we might expect them. But days passed and no men were forthcoming. I was inwardly glad, for never was I more reluctant to leave home. A tin box, well roped, stood in readiness in my bedroom. In it I had put a few dresses, reserving my newest and best for future visits. How often afterwards did I regret that I had not packed more, but no inkling of what was to happen entered my mind. How could it ?

I noticed that the Doctor and the Msungu had long talks together, which they always stopped when I appeared. Had I known then what they were discussing, I might have made more preparations. But I did not know that the wild Mkanda had refused to pay the tax levied on each of the

chiefs by the British Government, nor that a rumour had come that there might be a rising among the natives. Indeed, had I known, the Msungu would have assured me that the thing was impossible.

How well I remember that morning I left. While I was dressing the Msungu hurried into my room to tell me that the machilla men had come. My heart actually fell; but Achilandana rushed in excitedly for her few belongings. The other girls were jabbering outside the door. The boys had congregated in front of the verandah. The cook was crying in at the window desiring to know if he would "mblage nguko" (*kill a fowl*) for our lunch. My fingers were all thumbs, but I managed to dress somehow, and in less than an hour was riding away in my machilla; behind me the little thatched house which would be but a memory ever after. Down the hill, and it was out of sight, but I was not thinking of it. I would return ere long, I thought, but good-byes were always painful.

A whole procession was behind me, but it would go back at the first turn on the path. In two minutes we were there. "Goody-bye, Donna. Goody-bye, Donna," Mele and Ajaula were holding out their hands.

The machilla men paused. The moment is engraved on my memory. There was Ndendemele

also, shy behind the others, her white nicked teeth showing in the broad smile. "Goody-bye, Donna." She, too, must shake my hand.

"Good-bye, Mele, Ajaula and Ndendemele." I felt cold and unresponsive. The pathos was all behind. Why all this show of feeling? Let me get away and be done with it. I would return ere many days had passed. The Msungu and Doctor must have been there also, but I do not remember seeing them. The image of that little corner on the path, a red scar on the soil, the rough boulder with a cactus growing in its crevice, my little girls with their dark shining eyes imprinted themselves so firmly on my heart that there was no space for anything more. And the print was indelible for it has remained.

My machilla jolted. Long grasses shot up at each side. The dark kindly faces were gone for ever.

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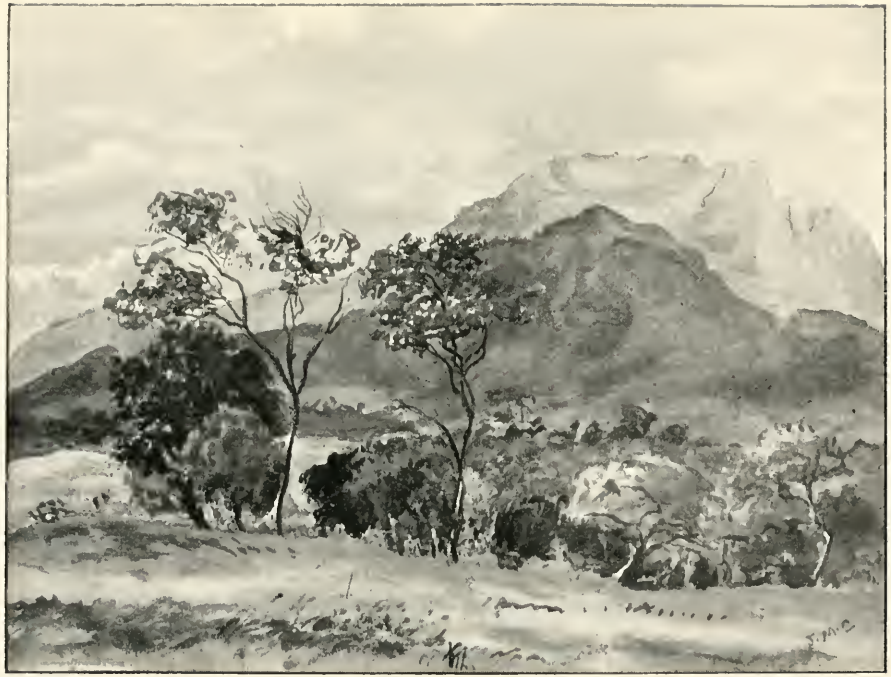
CHAPTER XXVII

THE CHIEF'S REVENGE

WE arrived at the Limbe shortly before sunset. Achilandana, full of importance, having had for the first time in her life, a ride in a machilla, Mr. H—— having given his for her benefit part of the way. We found our hostess in bed with malaria, but not released from her cares of housekeeping. A long narrow table, the length of the bed, stood close to her hand, on which lay nearly every eatable of the pantry which could be appropriated—the box of bread, tea, sugar, salt and lemons, etc. I thought it a good idea which I might carry back to Mlanje.

Mr. H—— returned to our Station next day.

I occupied a neat little guest house, on a branch of the verandah, consisting of a bedroom and dressing room. Achilandana slept on the floor in the latter. Every night I said the same thing



MOUNT PINGUE, FROM THE LIMBE BUNGALOW.

[Face p. 238.

to her, as I could say nothing else appropriate in Yao, *i.e.*, "Make the door fast, I do not wish a leopard to come in." And it was necessary. The hyænas howled weirdly outside, attracted by the humped cattle in the byres close by; but I did not know the native word for hyæna. Through the day one could not have guessed that any wild beast was near, so civilised everything looked compared with our Station. Once I saw a chameleon walking along our little verandah. Achilandana sprang after it, but in a moment it was up a tree swearing down at us, to the girl's great delight.

What a happy time that was. No evil presentiment haunted me. There was a picture beside my bed of a mother and a child sitting at a table. I doted on that child. Everything in fact had a joy to me.

One day, a week exactly after my arrival, Miss W—— and I visited another coffee planter's wife. While drinking tea in her pretty parlour how little I dreamt what was happening that very moment at my home on Mount Mlanje. Returning to the Limbe I rested myself on a rocking-chair in the verandah, talking to my friends till dinner would be ready. My hostess was better now. Her husband would be home ere long.

All that evening passed in peace. Next morning

Achilandana went out as usual to fetch my cup of tea. I sat up in bed and took it from her. I did not notice any difference in her expression, guessing nothing of what had happened, though the child must have been startled. While she had waited outside my hostess's room till tea would be ready, a man had run into the courtyard crying: "Ngondo!" (*War!*)

There was great excitement. The boys rushed out of the cookhouse, and gathered in a group round the man. Achilandana pressed forward and listened with staring eyes and open mouth. Disturbed by the commotion the mistress appeared on the scene.

"Ngondo! Ngondo!" cried the man again. "All the great white men have fled from Mlanje Mission. They are hiding amongst the rocks of the mountain, if they are not already destroyed. The wild chief Mkanda with all his men attacked them yesterday. They fled. They could not stand before him. Their palace is looted. I, who am only a child, have run all the way to tell you. Presenty, Donna, Presenty." (*Give me a present, lady.*)

Achilandana was only too familiar with the meaning of "Ngondo." Had not she, little over two years before, fled with the women to the mountains when the terrible chief Chikumbu made

war on her tribe. But this time "Ngondo" meant something different to her. It was bad enough certainly when her people were slain, but they killed in return. Now the dread word "Ngondo" had an awful significance. To her it meant fighting with God, Mlungu, as she called Him. The idea of God had recently dawned on her. As yet she saw Him only through the white man.

Her first impulse was to run and tell her Donna, but the planter's wife caught her by the shoulder and commanded her not to do so. She also bade all her black boys and girls to be silent on the subject.

* * * * * * *

I came out of my room into the glorious sunshine. The air smelt delicately of eucalyptus from the blue gum tree that touched the brown thatch with its bluey-green foliage. Breakfast was set in the verandah for the first time. My hostess met me, looking lovely in a cream and pink dress, made by herself of common art muslin which people at home would have made into screens. With what content I sat down to fried sardines and eggs and delicious thin slices of bread. Folk may talk of feasts. There are none so perfect as

a meal concocted in the wilds, or cooked on a wood fire beside a river, accompanied by the music of the rustling leaves, the croaking of frogs, or the sharp splash of a crocodile in the water.

But my peace did not last long. In the afternoon while I was sitting in the cool of the verandah a young planter entered.

"I am sorry to hear of the trouble at Mlanje," he said abruptly as we shook hands.

"Trouble! What trouble?" I gasped.

"The Mission was attacked yesterday by Mkanda, the chief, with a hundred or so men. Your husband and the others fled—"

My hostess ran out of the house. She clasped me in her arms. "Mr. S—, what are you saying?" she cried. "Not another word!" Then turning to me—"Don't be alarmed, dear. I am sure it will be all right."

I did not faint. I felt stunned. Fortunately at that moment, verifying the saying—"Man's extremity is God's opportunity"—a native came round the corner of the house, and handed me a note stuck on the end of a stick. It was from my husband, telling me that they were all safe, having taken refuge in Mr. Moir's house, and that he would join me in a few days.

In a few days! How often I repeated those words to myself during that time of anxiety and

suspense. We heard of natives, who had been sent with messages, murdered by the way. Every day I looked for his coming. Every night I walked out along the narrow path, bordered by high grass, and through the bush as far as it was safe, standing every little while to listen for the song of machilla men, or some noise which would tell me of their approach. But listen as I might, not a sound, not a stir, just a great, terrible silence all around me.

Night after night as the sun was setting, I turned back with a dull, sinking heart. Miss W—— always accompanied me, but for her I know not how I could have stood it. When a fortnight had gone we went as usual, going further into the bush, and standing till the sun bathed in fiery colours the accumulated clouds above the horizon. Reluctantly we turned back, I, feeling sick at heart and unable to bear the strain any longer.

I entered the bungalow, separating myself from my friend, who sat down in the verandah. I dared not at that moment face my sympathetic hosts. I crept into the little drawing room, which was quite dark now as the large wooden shutters had been put against the windows. I threw myself on the sofa, burying my face in the cushion.

Suddenly there was an unusual sound outside. I sat up, scarcely believing my ears. There was a

singing and clapping of hands. Surely I knew what that meant—a machilla with a white man must be coming. Yet I did not venture to go out. I pressed my hands to my heart. It could not be he. It must be some other. Then I heard my name called by my hostess. I ran out and joined her; then sure enough round the house came a machilla carrying a white man. It was the Msungu, though not as I knew him, for he had grown a beard. Mkanda had stolen his razors along with the other spoil.

After he had rested and had dinner we heard his story as we sat together in the drawing room. "Last Monday," he said, "we heard that a party of Administration soldiers had passed along the foot of the mountain, and soon we saw smoke and flames rising from what seemed to be Mkanda's village. In the evening we heard a rumour that if the soldiers moved off and went back to their fort, the chief might attack us; so we kept guard all night. Next day we started work as usual, but I sent out parties to watch and inform us of any movement. In the afternoon I felt I was taking fever so I crossed to the Doctor's house for some medicine. Before I reached his door a scout ran in breathless, crying "Ngondo!"

"I ran back, picked up my revolver, and was making to join the Doctor, when I saw him running

away from the back of his house. Immediately the Station seemed black with natives. There might be 150 to 200 men. Shots whizzed past me. I fled in the direction of the Linje stream. I saw the Doctor in front of me, the teacher behind. The latter had a very narrow escape. One bullet passed through his coat sleeve, grazing his knuckle, another through the leg of his trousers. My hat disappeared from my head.

"For some distance we were pursued; then I think they must have turned back to loot the house; though I did not know that then. Every moment we expected to see them behind us. I turned faint and crawled underneath a bank. The Doctor wanted to wait with me, but I sent him on, with what I thought was my last message to my wife. I lay there till nightfall when I started to make my way to Madza-ku-samba's, the nearest planter's house. Then I thought I heard someone in pursuit, and I plunged into the bush. I lost my track, and torn by thorns and bruised by tumbling over stones, I reached the river Lekabula, which I crossed with difficulty.

"I drew a breath of relief. Surely now my pursuers had turned back. But as deadly a foe was behind me. I heard the sound of some wild animal breaking through the long grass, evidently making towards me, and snorting with rage. I

don't know how I did it, or how it was, but a tree, like Jonah's gourd, appeared before me, and in desperation I pulled myself up, and sat trembling on a branch. A heavy body sprang at the tree. I could hear it breathing at the foot, but it was too dark to see anything. Then I turned dreadfully sick and forgot the beast, remembering that I had eaten some beans, growing by the path, that might have been poisonous. But I recovered, and sat shivering till the grey dawn.

"There were no signs of my enemy so I got down and found my way to a native village. The people took me in to a hut, spread a mat for me on the floor, and kindled a fire. Then they killed a hen and cooked it with sweet potatoes for my breakfast. I could not eat, so they gave me some tobacco for my pipe. Here I rested till the father of the family carried a message to Mr. Moir asking for a machilla. In an hour or two it arrived with sufficient men to carry me to his house. There I found the Doctor, the teacher and the gardener. They had fortified the house as best they could with bales of cotton.

"In a week we returned home as we heard that the Indian soldiers had come to guard the Station for a time. The natives had looted the house, and what they could not carry they smashed with their axes."

"And my sketches are lost, I suppose," I said.

"Oh, no! They carried them out of the house, then threw them into the bush as worthless. Mr. —— found nearly all of them, charred and reddened by the soil, but I think you may be able to clean them. Your watch also was found dropped by the way. The Moirs kindly gave us blankets and clothes, but for them I don't know what we would have done."

"And what shall I do without my things?" I asked.

The Msungu gave me a look, and his eyes seemed as they did in a golden June. "We are not going back," he said, "we are going home."

Home, sweet, sweet home! I could not believe it. He had to repeat it over again. For the time being I did not think of my black girls and boys. Though passionately fond of animals I never gave my poor likomba a thought. Only home and friends filled my heart. But next morning when Achilandana brought in our tea I realised what the parting would mean.

"Am I to go with you to England?" she asked, a yearning look in her eyes.

The Msungu said he would think about it. How anxiously she watched our faces all the day. What tales she told the natives of the time she would have in the great White Man's country.

No doubt she dreamed at night that she had grown a white woman. Again at dawn she brought in our tea.

"Achilandana, we are very sorry, but we find we cannot take you to England with us," said the Msungu kindly.

A something came into the girl's throat that she had never felt before. Tears swam in her eyes. She turned without a word and left the room. My heart was sore for her. I had not thought that she had so much feeling. As soon as I got up I gave her, for her very own, a large piece of soap. She smiled with delight, and as far as appearances went, seemed consoled.

I know now that she is happier where she is. Bwanali, our best boy, married her. I have received a photograph of the happy pair. Did I say a pair? I was wrong. Bwanali is holding a sweet little kanachi (*child*) in his arms.

But all these events seem but a dream now, though there may be a happy awakening when we shall all meet again. Yet a little proof is left to show that they really happened. I open my desk and take out a letter which I received from my husband that evening at the Limbe. I open it tenderly. The paper is stained by the red soil of Mount Mlanje, as if it also would send me a faint souvenir as a farewell gift. It is

written in a scrawling hand, but it is from my girls. Translated it reads :

" Donna, goody-bye, the washing is finished, the war is over. Donna, goody-bye.

" MELE, AJAULA, NDENDEMELE."

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